Steal This Hook!

Mysterious Disappearances

By Doug Beyer

Welcome to "Steal This Hook!," a new column of **Eberron** adventure hooks. Every other week this column will bring you, the DM, a bevy of Eberron ideas to steal for your campaign. Think of yourself as a picky, bib-wearing, hungry monarch and "Steal This Hook!" as platter after steaming platter heaped high with juicy delights. Grab whatever looks appetizing, your majesty, and toss the rest to the dogs! (You know, because there're always dogs.) You'll find several entrée-sized hooks and then a bevy of bite-sized mini-hooks in each installment.

Each "Steal This Hook!" column will have a topic that ties the hooks together -- kind of an *Iron Chef*-style theme ingredient that flavors all the ideas. The themes will vary from straightforward fantasy motifs to ludicrously bizarre Eberron headtrips. Our first theme? "Mysterious disappearances." So glad you asked!

The Case of the Locked Vault

A House Tharashk bounty hunter hires the heroes to investigate a rash of thefts from their private stores of Eberron dragonshards and other treasures. The treasures are kept sealed in a windowless stone vault behind an impressively warded iron door, and the vault is guarded day and night. The thefts have happened every night. The guards swear they didn't open the door or even see anyone -- the loot just mysteriously disappeared. Is a mystically skilled thief using *teleport* to enter and exit the vault? Could an ambitious ethereal filcher be coming back each night? Might someone have dug a tunnel under the vault? Or are the "thefts" a ruse to distract from the real crime -- many of the treasures are illusionary, and are disappearing as their spell durations end? The heroes need to bring their forensic skills to bear to solve this mystery.

Runaway in the Reaches

A farming family near the edge of the Eldeen Reaches' Towering Wood sends a call for adventurers to find their missing daughter. The girl was last seen three days ago, when she disappeared along with a heavy wool cloak, an antique shield, and two weeks' rations. Investigation may reveal that she had been receiving letters in the Sylvan tongue -- was she wooed by a charming satyr? Invited to join an unknown sect of Eldeen moon-worshippers? Or was she kidnapped by mischievous fey, who also stole the supplies to confuse the issue? Is her family covering a dark secret -- that they sold their daughter to evil druids in exchange for a bountiful harvest? The heroes must locate the girl, and time may be of the essence.

The Eyestalks Have It

A kalashtar scholar was away at a conference when his collection of preserved beholder eyestalks was stolen. When the heroes come to investigate, the first thing they discover is that the scholar is obsessed with the crime: he follows the PCs wherever possible and uses psionics to "eavesdrop" on the investigation when he can't personally be on the scene. Furthermore, the crime scene is perplexing -- the scholar's front door was apparently *chewed* open by something with powerful jaws, and his wood floors are gouged with claw-marks, yet the wards and locks on the glass display cases were carefully dispelled and disabled. Who would have taken the eyestalk collection? A purist sect of the Church of the Silver Flame persecuting the man for his kalashtar heritage? A mad artificer (with iron defenders) interested in the eyestalks as wands or as components for some bizarre, eldritch machine? A summoner (with a bound rast at her side) needing odd gifts for her hungry, conjured demons? Some poor, blind monster that believes the beholder eyes might grant it sight? An actual beholder and its servants that wants to end the kalashtar's abominable collecting?

The Missing Mummy

When the Historical Museum of Sharn's exhibit, "Ancient Rulers of Galifar," opens to the public, the most anticipated item on display is the recently-discovered sarcophagus of Bruudash the Third, a centuries-old Galifar lord. The docent of the exhibit throws open the sarcophagus to reveal Bruudash's mummified body, but besides the musk of embalming spice, it's empty. Did the local rich aficionado hire thugs for "grand theft mummy" to add to his private collection? Has a curse somehow shriveled the mummy to dust? Perhaps worst of all, did Bruudash walk out of his box of his own accord, bent on punishing the living for his centuries-long dirt nap?

One Carload Short of a Lightning Rail

The lightning rail train from Wroat arrives in Sharn -- *missing a car*. The train's conductor and security personnel explain, in half-shock, that while the train passed through some heavy fog, the private sleeping car simply vanished, leaving the train severed in two. They stopped the engine, reconnected the train, and continued on, hoping to get help in Sharn. What force could have snatched a car from a moving train? Was it *disintegrated* or *teleported*? Was the rest of the train somehow frozen in time (by a mass *sleep* spell, or even *time stop*), allowing the culprit(s) several undisturbed minutes in which to spirit away the car? Or was it snatched by a roc in the fog? A wrinkle: When the train left Wroat, the missing car carried the famous Brelish Last War veteran Forv Yannar, who was to speak at a rally in Sharn. Were Yannar's enemies intent on stopping that speech? Did Yannar himself stage his disappearance to get attention or to avoid assassins? Was he traveling with a valuable cache of Last War weapons? Finally, where is the train car and its passengers or cargo now?

Mini-Hooks

Still hungry for more adventure hooks? Here are a few bite-sized ideas to chew on.

- The Library of Korranberg hires the adventurers to locate certain crucial maps from a Last War refugee's journal that went missing during a bizarre raid by savage halflings.
- A dragonmark heir contacts the PCs to interview her family members when their dragonmarks begin disappearing.
- A living *mass invisibility* spell somehow gets transported to a crowded market and causes havoc when people and objects begin vanishing at random.
- A Cyran expatriate hires the heroes to explore the ruins of her hometown in what is now the Mournlands, but now only a misty lake remains where the town used to be.

- An important Karrnathi official goes missing but reappears just before a crucial vote involving policies on changeling rights; the heroes are hired to investigate what happened.
- A warforged thespian takes a break between scenes of a high-profile play and is never seen again.
- An Old Galifar-era village once thought lost to time reappears on a misty night during the conjunction of four planes -- and may vanish again when the conjunction ends.
- An *arcane marked* letter of credit from a House Kundarak bank in the Mror Holds must reach Korth, Karrnath, in two weeks' time, but witnesses at a small inn along the way say that the courier vanished, leaving his traveling equipment in his room.
- The stone gargoyle decorations on Queen ir'Wynarn's castle in Aundair have gone missing overnight; royal scions hire adventurers to aid in their recovery.
- Morgrave University loses contact with their team of archaeologists on a dig in Q'Barra. Coincidentally, a cell of Dreaming Dark spies and assassins have taken up residence in the vine-covered ruins the scientists were uncovering.
- A pair of wererat criminals are captured but they vanish from their locked coach during their transfer to Dreadhold.

Editor's Note: For those of you lucky enough to be too young to remember 1970, that was the year Abbie Hoffman (Google him -- yes, him) published a book called *Steal This Book*. It had nothing to do with **D&D** or **Eberron**, but in the spirit of anarchy, we decided to hijack his title for our series anyway. Abbie would approve.

About the Author

Doug Beyer spent a lot of time getting philosophy degrees until he figured out that he should just move to Seattle and become a web developer for Wizards of the Coast. Now he spends his days working on games and his evenings playing them. Doug uses the time normally allotted for sleeping to lurk on the Wizards.com message boards as his alter ego, WotC_Doog.

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Steal This Hook!

Found in an Old Book

By Doug Beyer

Welcome again to Steal This Hook! This edition's theme is *found in an old book*: adventure hooks that begin with someone cracking open the pages of a careworn tome, for good or for ill. (Hey, who are we kidding? Of course it's for ill). Unleash one or more of these on your players, and show them that ignorance may in fact be bliss!

The Blank Codex

The uncle of one of the PCs dies and leaves his adventuring nephew or niece a curious old codex bound in leather and locked with a *keycharm* (*Shadows of the Last War*, pg. 24). The cover has no title but is decorated with circular sigils. When they get it open, its pages are blank -- yet the book radiates magic! It turns out that each page is written with a special kind of *illusory script*: unreadable unless certain conditions are met. Some of the pages are time-based: one becomes readable when the plane of Dolurrh is waxing, for example. Others are based on characteristics of the reader: only elves or those with the Mark of Handling can read certain pages.

What can be read there? The book is the journal of a wizard and Last War veteran in the uncle's family (the wizard's *arcane mark* is probably on it somewhere). The wizard traveled extensively and saw many wonders and mysteries, making the book a gold mine of potential adventures. Now that it has emerged, the book may also draw attention to the heroes. A representative of House Sivis would pay handsomely for such a work of scribing; enemies of the old wizard may try to steal it; and an obsessed cultist who believes it may contain a map to a protected seal may threaten or kill the heroes for it.

The Henge in the Gloaming

In the Eldeen city of Xandrar, Gatekeeper druids are concerned about signs that the poaching of good creatures in the Towering Wood has increased. They ask the PCs for help investigating these crimes against their faith. It turns out that someone has been buying up pixie wings, giant eagle feathers, and unicorn horns, and payment has always been in the form of letters of credit from Morgrave University.

Meanwhile, in the thickest, darkest, most claustrophobic grove of The Gloaming, a Druidic Studies student and his horrid ape companions work tirelessly to build... something. They fell trees. They move huge, oblong stones. They arrange a collection of wings, feathers, and horns on a rune-covered stone slab, following exactly the diagrams and directions in a set of Old Galifar scrolls titled *A Dialectical Discussion of the Planes*, by Professor Uric Helbaine, paying special attention to the third scroll: "Musings concerning the Early-Walkers and their Connection with Mabar." The heroes must not only confront the misguided student but also deal with the disastrous consequences of focusing the Gloaming's negative energies through the mystical henge dreamed up

by the long-dead Professor Helbaine.

The Almanac of Tomorrow

In a dungeon beneath the Mournlands, the heroes discover a chamber full of loose parchment pages (note: fire hazard!). Buried under the pages are the remains of a magical almanac that adds a new page to itself each day. Years ago, the book's cover burst under the strain of the stream of new pages, and now the dungeon room is packed with them. Each page carries the date it was created and makes predictions about what will happen *tomorrow* (that's tomorrow from the day the page was created). They predict weather patterns, casualty numbers, troop movements, and other significant events.

The most recent page reports that a disaster will occur tomorrow, and the heroes may be able to prevent it! Perhaps it reports that, despite the Last War being over, tomorrow's "casualty numbers" are in the hundreds, and it states "Cyre" is moving troops toward the border of Thrane (which could mean the Lord of Blades is planning an attack). Perhaps it reports a weather disaster brought on by a rogue member of House Lyrandar. It may report pestilence and famine that the heroes know to be caused by an evil curse.

The almanac loses accuracy if it is removed from the dungeon chamber but still produces useful information. Investigating its origin might lead to further adventures.

Expedition of the Tome of Glyphs

The heroes' patron informs them of rumors that the true Tome of Glyphs, a legendary book detailing the history of giants in Xen'drik, may be located in a dungeon in the misty jungles of Q'barra. An archaeologist and linguist of Sharn, Brenna Dowen, will accompany the adventurers and help them follow a set of clues to the whereabouts of the dungeon.

At the dungeon entrance, they find the deserted camp of a rival expedition. They may be too late! Inside the dungeon, the party comes upon a hexagonal chamber containing six enormous books (each about the size of a noble's bed) on heavy display stands. Which is the right one? Bloody smears on the floor lead to one wall. Then the books attack! The party has been lured into the lair of six mimics (or whatever number your PCs can handle). The previous expedition was subdued or destroyed, and their remains are poorly hidden behind a secret door at the end of the trail of blood. Is the real Tome of Glyphs somewhere in this dungeon, or was a crafty illithid using the legend to lure adventurers into its mimic-lair? Perhaps Brenna Dowen tricked the party for her own reasons.

Monsters in the Library Basement

Mr. Pumble Dombibbin, a night clerk at the Library of Korranberg, calls the adventurers' for help one moonless evening. He trapped two monsters in the bottom floor of the Library, which houses books in storage. Only the heavy door leading to the stairwell has kept them at bay. Dombibbin has no explanation for how the monsters got into the Library; he just wants them captured and removed. He insists they not be killed and will give the heroes a handsome reward if they succeed quickly.

The PCs stalk the monsters among the dark corridors and dusty stacks. Behind an iron door labeled "Rare Books," whose lock is broken, they come face-to-face with a pair of fihyrs (*Monster Manual II*, or substitute any aggressive monsters with appropriate CR). The fihyrs are actually Mr. Dombibbin's sons, ages 12 and 10. There were accidentally transformed by a spell they read out of a nearby tome. The spell affected their minds, too, so

they believe themselves to be ferocious fihyrs. Mr. Dombibbin knows what happened but he will be in big trouble if his employers find out he allowed his boys to play in the stacks. He believes he can reverse the spell if the PCs trap the monstrous boys and recover the book they read.

Mini-Hooks

Still hungry for more adventure hooks? Here are some bite-sized book-themed ideas to chew on.

- What appears to be a book of spells is actually a recipe for an extended magical ritual to call down meteors from the Ring of Siberys -- with the power to destroy an entire city.
- In the ruins of a half-sunk Shadow Marches temple, the heroes discover a set of stone tablets describing the location of an ancient artifact related to the daelkyr.
- A book of poetry with pages of fine vellum is found at an estate sale. The author turns out to be the personal scribe of old King Jarot. It could be full of clues of historical import, coveted by many nations.
- A financial ledger in the Mror Holds reveals evidence that an underground organization seized a huge amount of resources through shrewd, almost prophetic business deals. Perhaps the Aurum has enslaved an earth weird to guide their business practices.
- The PCs are hired to steal a book from a private collection. The book itself is unimportant but it contains a magic dagger hidden in a hollowed-out space in the center pages, and the dagger is happy to be free.
- A student of the magical arts must finish her dissertation on necromantic phenomena before her academic deadline. She needs the heroes to bring her tissue or bone samples of at least three specific undead creatures within one week.
- A famous novel is delivered to one of the PCs -- with a message from the author penned in blood inside the front cover.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Scofflaw Heroics

By Doug Beyer

This edition of Steal This Hook has the theme *scofflaw heroics:* hooks in which the PCs must bend or break the law to do the right thing. They may run afoul of all manner of law enforcement, from the Sharn City Watch to a Q'barra blackscale warrior-squad, but they'll know in their hearts that justice was served. Some lawful characters may find these hooks unsettlingly unprincipled, while others see them as compatible with their own personal moral law. In any case, weave these into your campaign to remind your players that, in Eberron, heroes can't always follow the straight and narrow definition of what's right. Or use them as ways to get the heroes into trouble -- they could be framed for the very acts they were hired to commit!

Medicine Hunters

The King's Forest (*ECS*, pg. 150) is the only known lair of the secretive woodling jaguar (see *MMIII* for the woodling template or substitute some other rare jungle creature). A wizard needs the liver of the creature to create a potion to save his son from a debilitating disease. Hunting in the King's Forest, however, is strictly illegal -- especially for rare species! Can the heroes evade the Knight Rangers long enough to hunt down one of the creatures to save the boy? The Jungle Boys are territorial outlaws, but they know the King's Forest well -- will they help or hinder the heroes' mission? Might the wizard actually be a cultist of the Dragon Below who needs the liver for a more nefarious purpose?

Escaping the Hangman's Noose

An elven blacksmith charged with murder will be hanged at sundown tomorrow, but his daughter knows he's innocent. There's no time to prove his innocence before the appointment with the gallows: the heroes must rescue him from death first, and then, while on the run from the law, help seek the evidence that will clear him. Did the man's prosecutors simply miss clues that lead to the real killer, or is the man being deliberately framed? Perhaps the real killer is a relative with a grudge who has used their relationship to frame him. Perhaps the man was in the process of forging a weapon that could expose and slay a vampire secretly preying on the town, and the vampire's minions have influenced the town's process of law to condemn the man before the weapon can be finished.

Spies at the Keep

The PCs don't have the sanction of law on their side when they trespass around Arythawn Keep on the border of Thrane, and they can't claim a legal right to gather surveillance on activities there. That's just the sort of thing they'll need to do as spies hired by representatives of the government of Zilargo. The gnomes of Zilargo suspect the government of Thrane is using Arythawn Keep as a testing ground for unwholesome experiments on corpses collected from the Mournlands. The heroes are furnished with disguises and fake identification papers, but they'll be on their own if discovered. The cleric of the Silver Flame who commands the Keep is trying to advance Thrane's interests by resurrecting key Cyran soldiers and generals from the Mournlands, and he won't be merciful with foreign spies intruding on his plans.

Jewel-Hunting under Arcanix

Diamonds and other precious jewels encrust the underside of the floating towers of Arcanix -- everybody knows this. The ivory-tower mages of Arcanix prohibit anyone from removing them; they believe that the gems help hold the floating islands aloft., The rakish Lord Kenth ir'Kenthi, a noble of Aundair, is sick of seeing those wasted jewels glittering down at him when they float over his lands. He hires the PCs to do reconnaisance work for him. Lord Kenth needs information about how well the jewels are guarded -- but hey, if the characters can bring back some of the actual jewels, too, all the better. In fact, Kenth wants 80 percent of any removed gems. In exchange he offers legal protection should they be caught and the use of some magebred spider eater mounts capable of carrying the heroes up to a floating tower.

Undercover in Droaam

Droaam may be a strife-ridden, savage frontier, but it's still a sovereign nation under the Treaty of Thronehold. Why, then, are the PCs infiltrating the power structure of the dangerous Daughters of Sora Kell (*ECS*, pg. 166)? Why are they posing as criminal warlords, currying favor with the Daughters' generals and minions, and seeking an audience with the Daughters themselves? Are they mad? Were they hired by the Gatekeepers to find information about the political landscape of Droaam? Are they on a mission from the Brelish crown to assassinate Sora Katra? Are they actually working for one of the sisters in a plot against the other two? Might a foreign enforcer squad mistake them for actual criminals and blow the heroes' cover in Droaam? The PCs will need their wits about them in Droaam's shifting political structure to accomplish their goals.

Mini-Hooks

- A mage's cache of material components was stolen by a notorious rogue. The PCs are hired to steal them back by whatever means necessary before the components can be used to summon a storm elemental (*MMIII*) from Kythri.
- The heroes are sent to kidnap a young prince -- for his own good. Unbeknownst to the prince's guardians, assassins in the palace will kill the prince during the next full moon.
- A slightly shady security agency headed by a rogue member of House Kundarak is looking for daring adventurers to test the defenses of military fortresses around Breland.
- The only way to stop the Lord of Blades is for the PCs to restart an illegal creation forge and churn out a defense force of warforged chargers.
- The PCs are hired to start a riot during an important election in Karrnath.
- The heroes must give false testimony at the trial of one of their friends, but the courtroom is about to be enchanted with a *zone of truth*.
- A greedy lord taxes his vassals to pay for the expensive gifts he buries with his ancestors. The PCs help the serfs by robbing the lord's mausoleum to return their hard-earned funds.
- One of the adventurers unexpectedly sees her own face on a "wanted" poster outside a tavern.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Ghoulish Tales

By Doug Beyer

Welcome again to Steal This Hook! Adventure stories thrive on horror -- fear is a natural motivator for characters to perform desperate (read: action-point-involving) acts. In the spirit of the season, and particularly in the spirit of 18th and 19th century gothic horror fiction, the theme of this edition of Steal This Hook! is *ghoulish tales.* These are adventure hooks you can use to weave a bit of gloomy, gothic horror into your *Eberron* campaign. Let's get ghoulish...

The Morgue-Mind

A murder mystery the heroes are investigating leads them to the Constable's Morgue, a particularly large corpse-storehouse run by law enforcement. The heroes stumble on a gruesome scene: the kindly old clerk at the morgue is hunched over one body with a saw, and has already mutilated several other bodies in storage there. After the clerk is apprehended, the local sheriff tells PCs that this behavior is wildly out of character for the gentle clerk; someone or some*thing* must have induced him to perform these awful acts. A brain in a jar (*Libris Mortis*) created by a necromancer has taken up hidden residence at the morgue, and is looking for a new body to inhabit. The diseased brain uses its psionic powers to control those around it to find the perfect body. Perhaps only the necromancer herself, full of remorse at her inability to control the awful creation, can help the PCs to stop it. Or will the brain decide that the skull of the necromancer who created it would be its perfect home?

The Bell in the Mist

The fog that envelops the Mournlands muffles most sound, but the toll of a bell echoes through the dead-gray mist, beckoning the heroes to investigate. Following the sound, the PCs discover a small church, its white paint flaking away with age, its pews rotting. The bell in the tower is being rung by the *telekinesis* abilities of two ghosts, a young girl and a young boy. When approached, they mouth silent words and flee through a wall toward the small graveyard behind the church, and the spectral form of a long-dead cleric appears in their place! Is this a malevolent spectre (*MMI*) looking to create more spectres to enthrall or a friendly ghost who needs a favor? Are the ghost children bait for the trap of a warforged necromancer or are they helpless spirits unable to leave the churchyard since the Day of Mourning?

The Hand-Takers

Someone in urban Zilargo is stealing hands. The bodies of gnomes, humans, and other races have turned up with their hands sliced off at the wrist -- over twelve such bodies in Korranberg alone. The heroes meet a crucial witness when a handless warforged comes forward with a fantastic story: that he survived an attack by a gang of rune-covered skeletons with *fleshy hands*. The bony gang overpowered him and knocked him unconscious, and

when he awoke, his appendages (one hand and one armblade) were taken. Is a group of spellstitched undead (*MMII*) the cause of the attacks? Are the attacks random, or are the victims connected somehow? Perhaps a sick-minded sorcerer wants the hands of master artisans, believing they will grant him creative power. Perhaps a Vol cultist is using the hands to imbue his animated dead minions with the arcane abilities of the hands' former owners. Either way, the bony gang (one of which now sports an armblade) may attack the characters next.

Six Piles of Ashes

Six citizens of Bluevine in Aundair have gone missing over six nights, and the remaining townsfolk seek the help of anyone brave enough to investigate. Bluevine's town meeting-place, a dusty field surrounding a huge, artistically-carved boulder outside of town, appears to be the source of the trouble. The heroes find the boulder encircled by half a dozen scorched and shallow pits, each containing a hill of ashes. The base of the boulder is blackened with soot as well -- what could be going on? Is the boulder a Gatekeeper seal designed to keep a daelkyr lord away from this plane? Or is it a focus for dark fire-elemental energies? Has magical mischief summoned a magma mephit, which is in turn summoning others of its kind to prey on sleepy Bluevine? Does the boulder conceal a geothermal vent leading down to the lair of a conflagration ooze (*MMIII*) hungry for chaos and panic?

The Leech of Zarash'ak

Zarash'ak is called the City of Stilts because of the supports that keep it above the gloomy waters of the Shadow Marches. Those same supports also hide certain...activities...that occur in the waters from being seen from the city walkways above. Grulsh was a half-orc member of House Tharashk and a productive merchant in Eberron dragonshards before he was turned into a vampire. Now the raging blood-thirst within him compels him to do evil, and he preys on the working class of the city he once loved. Using his *spider climb* ability, he creeps along the undersides of Zarash'ak walkways, snatching unsuspecting travelers and draining their blood before slinking off to a coffin sunk somewhere in the muck. The heroes are hired by House Tharashk to help them uncover the mystery of the disappearing travelers, and Grulsh's disappearance is their first priority.

Mini-hooks

Want more Eberron-style ghoulish tales? Here are some mini-hooks to prime your imagination. (Happy Halloween!)

- A pirate captain of Lhazaar was buried alive by his mutinous crew on the island of Greentarn. Rumor has it that if one spends a night in the pirate's coffin, buried alive in the same wooden box, the pirate's spirit will appear and describe the whereabouts of lost treasure.
- A deathguard paladin from Aerenal asks for the heroes' help in annihilating a charnel hound (*MMIII*) that stalks the wilds of his homeland.
- A kalashtar child's nightmares begin corrupting the thoughts of her entire village.
- When an eccentric old gnome is questioned about a series of murders, he blames the creepy marionettes that reside in his attic.
- Under deep vaults in the Mror Holds lie the remains of a long-dead madman, which must be properly buried in sanctified ground before his spirit will stop haunting the mountain passes.
- Dusty footprints lead toward, but not away from, a macabre oil painting that seems to add more and more faces onto its canvas each night.
- One clear night every year, a lightning rail junction replays the scene of a terrible crash that occurred there during the first days of the rail system.

- A rakshasa begins construction of an enormous musical instrument composed of the skulls and bones of hundreds of elves -- an eldritch machine designed to bring forth melodies capable of waking the rakshasa's dark masters.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Life-or-Death Countdowns

By Doug Beyer

Welcome again to Steal This Hook! Today's theme is *life-or-death countdowns:* adventure hooks in which heroes race a countdown to disaster. How will the PCs react when the difference between living and dying is a matter of a few crucial days, hours, or seconds? Steal these hooks and work them into your **Eberron** campaign to find out!

Touch of the Keeper

The innkeeper wakes up the PCs in the middle of the night. He says that a shipment of *potions ofremove disease* was lost somewhere along the road between here and the shipment's destination: a disease-stricken village. He asks the heroes to help find the courier, and recover the shipment and deliver it to the village. Time is short; people are dying from the disease there every day, plus the innkeeper's sister and brother-in-law live there. Because of that, he worries that they might fall prey to the disease as well. Though the road to the village winds through hilly bandit territory, he and others don't think that bandits took the shipment. The courier actually is the culprit since he diverted the potions to a higher bidder: a kobold mine that is infested with green slime. Can the PCs negotiate with the kobolds to recover enough of the shipment to save the village? What happens when it turns out that the unscrupulous courier travels from town to town *spreading* magical diseases (and selling his fake *remove disease* potions) in the name of the dark deity known as the Keeper?

The Moon's Curse

That tusk made a nasty gouge -- but with the wereboar slain, the only matter the heroes must attend to now is curing the lycanthropy that lurks in the wounded PC's veins. Stranded in the midst of the Shadow Marches, locating belladonna (wolfsbane) will be difficult; and for it to be effective, the afflicted hero must consume it within an hour of the attack. If belladonna can't be found, then the countdown to the next full moon begins, which is when everyone can expect the afflicted PC to run amok in his new boar guise -- unless the heroes can find a cleric of 12th level or higher in the next three days. If that doesn't work, they can see about casting *remove curse* on the victim *during* the three-day full moon period. . . . But by that point, a traveling missionary of the Church of the Silver Flame has discovered the PC's condition. He offers to help, but he secretly contacts some allies to come capture the PC before he or she can become a threat to "the populace and to him/herself." In any case, only days remain before the issue is forced one way or another.

The Secret of the Stolen Psyche

During a visit to a small town on the western end of the Towering Wood, Patriarch Dalin d'Vadalis falls victim to a rakshasa's dark spell. His body crumples and his soul is stolen away -- to be used for evil in the Demon Wastes. House Vadalis summons the adventurers to accompany Brumar d'Vadalis, Dalin's brother, on a quest into the

heart of the Demon Wastes to recover the patriarch's spirit. The clock is ticking: The soul must be restored to the patriarch's body in a matter of eight days, or he will die. Even worse, the rakshasa who cast the spell believes that the Vadalis family holds the key to freeing the imprisoned rajah overlords. If he can perform a divination ritual on the captured soul, he could trace the Vadalis bloodline to a secret branch of the family that associates with a noble blue dragon named Tarys. If the rakshasa learns of Tarys and the power she wields over certain Khyber seals, it could spell the beginning of a new Age of Demons.

Countdown to the Year of Undeath

Dolurrh is coterminous with the Material Plane only once every hundred years: the last time, when the Last War was in its infancy, the Realm of the Dead poured thousands of lost souls into Eberron. Now only days remain before it happens again -- and Thrane is about to make a crucial mistake. In the Mournlands near Thrane's border, a new manifest zone of Dolurrh has appeared. The government of Thrane is arming paladins and commoners alike with flametouched iron swords, planning to attack the manifest zone and all undead within it once it "opens" -- however, the PCs have reason to believe that the restless dead who will be summoned there are actually the souls of innocent soldiers from throughout the history of the Last War, including citizens of Thrane and those who died on the Day of Mourning. The dead will be confused, mute and apathetic from the effects of Dolurrh, may attack back at Thrane's troops out of bewilderment -- yet they have no desire to harm anyone. Can the PCs gather evidence to stop Thrane's tragic mistake? One of lost souls, a young general who died fighting for Cyre, knows the secret behind the Day of Mourning. Can the PCs learn enough from him to help rescue some of the dead from Dolurrh, or even somehow redeem the Mournlands, before the Realm of the Dead ends its coterminous year?

The Perils of Giant Wizardry

In an ancient Xen'drik dungeon built by an industrious, now-extinct species of hill giant, the PCs encounter deadly traps as well as aging mechanical wonders that, in their neglected state, are just as dangerous as the traps. This combined with the fact that the PCs must drag a large stone statue into the dungeon's depths to unlock a lost treasure makes for many life-or-death moments. A massive portcullis that once acted as an automated entry gate now slams shut at unpredictable times. The timing gear on a moving walkway is loose, causing the walkway to accelerate wildly or stop suddenly. An odd giant totem pole with rotating heads is a combination lock to open a secret chamber, but four of the five correct combinations will seal the chamber after a matter of seconds, and three of those will begin flooding the chamber with brackish water soon after. The central device of the entire dungeon is a mystic artifact that radiates power to the entire subterranean structure -- in fact, its energy has counterbalanced the withering hand of time for centuries. If the heroes can drag the stone statue through a shield of whirring blades guarding the artifact, they have a chance to remove the artifact -- but without the artifact's power, the ancient structure begins to collapse. The heroes may have only a dozen rounds to escape before the dungeon crushes them.

Mini-Hooks

- As they regain consciousness after an ambush, the heroes are tied to a driverless House Orien coach that is hurtling toward the edge of a cliff.
- The heroes must rescue the noble's niece from a menacing spellgaunt (*Monster Manual II*, or substitute another arachnid creature) before it begins the process of draining her magical abilities -- but they must cross a treacherous underground lake guarded by a chuul (*Monster Manual*, or substitute another aquatic subterranean creature) to get to her.
- The heroes must capture the shaman of a Poison Dusk lizardfolk tribe to discern the nature of the deadly

poison she uses, before a valued NPC dies from an envenomed arrow wound.
- A child is lost somewhere in Breland's King's Forest -- time is running out before he will die of exposure.
- A trapped room's ceiling begins to lower on the heroes, and they must answer three riddling *magic mouths* to escape.
- An enchanted mask is found on a deserted galleon from Sarlona, and a series of bodies begin to show up, tracking the mask's path to the PCs.
- During an unearthly storm, the heroes must rescue a family of dwarven travelers before a tornado sweeps them from their hiding place.
- The rope suspending a lift platform is fraying during a fight.
- A wedding in which a devious changeling has replaced the bride must be stopped.

About the Author

Doug Beyer spent a lot of time getting philosophy degrees until he figured out that he should just move to Seattle and become a web developer for Wizards of the Coast. Now he spends his days working on games and his evenings playing them. Doug uses the time normally allotted for sleeping to lurk on the Wizards.com message boards as his alter ego, WotC_Doog.

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Steal This Hook!

War-Weary Souls

By Doug Beyer

The Last War littered Khorvaire with corpses, but it may have been even less kind to those who live on today. Those who survived that century of blood and darkness were left with scarred bodies and tainted memories. These brooding characters can generate emotional and dramatic adventure hooks for your campaign. Welcome to a war-weary souls edition of Steal This Hook!

A Tale of Guilt and Honor

Brother Yerrond, an aging cleric of the Sovereign Host, bashes the ornate stained-glass windows of his temple. He scratches runic symbols on his forehead. He leaves town, carrying a bar laden with weights across his shoulders, leaving his community wondering what hidden guilt had been eating away at him. The heroes are asked to track down Yerrond, and when they do, they find him making his way toward the Mournlands. Yerrond assures them that he hasn't gone mad, but he asks for their help in locating a particular family from Cyre. Because he killed the youngest son during the final years of the Last War, he seeks to offer his life in the name of Dol Arrah to the family as payment for their son's. Brother Yerrond refuses help with his heavy weight during the entire journey, but he appreciates the heroes' assistance with the perils of the trip.

The Captain and the Hag

Captain Farras tells no stories of being a Karrnathi Last War veteran; he was an officer whose red scale armor held decorations from many victories. He fought alongside and *among* legions of elite undead, and he became more comfortable with these vicious, living-hating abominations than with live soldiers. Now that the War has ended, drowning in emptiness and purposelessness, he's still obsessed with those undead creatures. One night, as he roams a graveyard gripping a shred of war-banner, a hunched and twisted figure who perceives his plight approaches him. She offers to teach him the discipline of necromancy, and he accepts. What might become of this foul pact? Will he succeed in leading a troop of howling undead in his red scale armor once more? What is the nature of the hunched hag mentor? What happens when Captain Farras' rampage kills someone he cares about -- will he want to raise her from the dead as well?

Jury Duty

Mrs. Bebblebaum lost her three children in the War over five years ago -- but she doesn't know it. One year ago, the nearsighted and slightly senile old lady opened the door to Gim, a brave changeling who served shoulder-to-shoulder with her three children. Gim began to tell her the tragic news -- but somehow the pathetic look of Mrs.

Bebblebaum made him shift into the persona of her eldest son instead. She embraced him and welcomed him in.

Through a heroic effort of shapeshifting skill, Gim impersonated her three children for a year. However, Mrs. Bebblebaum's brother recently found out, and now Gim is on trial for fraud and supernatural impersonation. According to local law, he must be judged by a "jury of impartials," which usually means travelers not native to the area -- and the PCs are chosen to be that jury.

Mrs. Bebblebaum is heartbroken about her children, but not angry about the deception -- her brother is the complaining party. The heroes must hear the facts of the case from both sides, interpret the laws of the region, and decide whether Gim is guilty. The decision may come down to what the PCs feel about the heart-rending testimonies of Mrs. Bebblebaum, the brother, Gim's commanding officer, and Gim himself.

The Warforged-Forged

A warforged veteran takes up a kind of sculptural armorsmithing and forges dozens of suits of platemail "self-portraits" in an attempt to express and understand his new destiny in a peacetime world. A barely sane worshiper of the Fury named Iruvia takes advantage of the sculptor's industriousness by casting *animate objects* on the suits of armor, filling the warforged's empty manikins with a dark purpose. After Iruvia's temporary army makes a pit stop at the weaponsmith's shop, they terrorize the town. Does Iruvia seek a way to make the armor her permanent entourage? Will the sight of all those copies of himself attacking his home village drive the sculptor mad? Was that Iruvia's plan all along?

Taint of the Past

Kennrun, the site of several major battles on the eastern edge of Breland, is now a grief-stricken human settlement beset with awful memories of the Last War. Strangely, however, memories about the war have been spotty recently. A Sharn-native biographer in Kennrun contacts the heroes when she discovers that the townsfolk have forgotten the War completely. Investigation reveals that strange machinery is running below Fort Kennrun -- an eldritch machine that can steal memories -- and that preparations are being made to expand its power to affect entire countries of Khorvaire. Who built the device, and for what purpose? Has someone else discovered its power, and has that person decided he or she can use it for a good motive? What are the consequences of those memories being evaporated in Kennrun, or elsewhere?

Mini-Hooks

- A minotaur mercenary seeks to recover the bejeweled horn stolen from him in the War.
- House Jorasco healers need an escort on their journey to locate a group of soldiers lost during a decade-old battle.
- During a national veteran's holiday in Zilargo, a demonstrator becomes violent and takes a hostage.
- Pieces of an ancient hobgoblin scroll reveal forgotten ruins buried under the property of a cranky dwarven general.
- King Boranel's daughter Borina seeks war stories from Karrnathi veterans, but she discovers evidence of war crimes. She hires the heroes to help uncover a conspiracy.
- A legion of not-yet-conscious warforged is discovered in a secret lab.
- A shifter father seeks the body of his son, who was presumed to have been killed in action in Aundair.
- Professors at Morgrave University need magical expertise in raising an airship that crashed and sunk to the bottom of Lake Galifar during the War; it may be full of historical treasures.
- Two changeling brothers swear revenge on their abusive commanding officer -- and eventually the entire

Brelish military -- who sent them into unnecessary danger during the War.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

The Dark-Cloaked Stranger

By Doug Beyer

A cloak has many jobs -- it hides a stranger's face, conceals her profile, and preserves her anonymity. From the PCs' perspective, it creates a mystery they must solve. Steal these hooks that all involve a *dark-cloaked stranger*, and throw the cloak of mystery around your campaign.

The Mysterious Muckraker

A red-bearded kalashtar rogue pulls back the hood of his *cloak of elvenkind* and appears from the shadows. He says he traveled here to expose a bloody conspiracy involving House Ghallanda during its Wandering Inn traveling fair -- and to line the pockets of his lovely cloak along the way. Will the PCs believe this free spirit and help him investigate? Is it actually possible that the halflings of the Hostelers Guild conceal a murderous secret, or is the rogue merely baiting the PCs into a wild goose chase? Are the heroes on the verge of uncovering corruption in the name of justice, or are they about to level a damaging, false claim at an innocent house, for some power-seeker's dark ends? It may be imperative to track down the background of the redheaded rogue before proceeding, and a local half-elf may know how to pinpoint where the man procured that magic cloak.

Figure on the Gnomes' Waterfront

The PCs decide to shadow a suspicious cloaked figure who is skulking with an odd limp around the Korranberg docks. The figure could turn out to be a badly damaged, down-on-its-luck warforged casing waterfront shops for things it could steal. Or perhaps it is two Kech Volaar goblin brothers on stilts, who are on a crazy mission to gain entry to the Library of Korranberg. Or perhaps it's a young girl with darting eyes and a heavy suitcase full of the treasure recently missing from the Museum of Korranberg. In any case, the person(s) behind the cloak is desperate enough to try anything. The heroes have an unpredictable encounter ahead of them, and they could end up helping the person with his/her plans or working to thwart them.

The Playthings of Fortune

An older human man removes his cloak and sits down at the party's tavern table. His dress, though dusty and sweaty, indicates a more refined background than the others in this dingy dive, which makes more sense when he introduces himself as Professor Burk Hammat of Morgrave University. He explains that he is a member of the Dharuuc-Bal, a group of ten local academics who spend their free time adventuring and thrill-seeking (their name is a goblin phrase meaning "Playthings of Fortune"). Since their adventures are usually of uncertain legality, they would all lose their tenure if the University found out about their escapades -- but now they're in trouble. A mind flayer and its voidmind minions (*Monster Manual III,* page 187) captured three of their number while spelunking

in a nearby cavern, and now Professor Hammat needs *real* adventurers to come to their aid -- as discreetly as possible!

Where the Dead May Hide

A walking corpse wearing a cloak to hide its appearance is looking for a way to take the train to Karrnath, and it needs the heroes' help to make the journey. This may be an opportunity for a serious story about a restless spirit trying to return home and the "undead discrimination" he faces along the way, or -- perhaps more likely -- a silly, light-hearted adventure about a zombie (or other undead) on the run. To keep the tension high, have numerous close calls, with discovery just around the corner. The ticket-taker wants to stamp the undead rider's card and compare his face with his ID papers. A nearby traveler complains about the smell coming from the party's compartment. A child rolls a ball right between the legs of the zombie and runs to catch it -- only to look up into those dead eyes. . . . There may be one or more other groups on the train trying to locate the departed traveler at the same time: some living family members who claim it owes them money, or some obsessed Vol cultists, or a biographer who just won't give up.

The King's Guest

The crown of Breland has put up a secret guest in one tower of Brokenblade Castle. The Brelish capital is abuzz, because the only information known about the guest is that the cooks have been asked to prepare quadruple the normal amount of food for the guest, and a local tailor has been sent an *enormous* (12-foot long), black, woolen cloak by the Brelish crown for repairs. Wroat's notorious gossip rag, the *Wroat Daily Gazette*, will pay anyone a hefty premium for the scoop on who this guest is, and the resourceful PCs are contacted straightaway.

Mini-Hooks

- A worried changeling father asks the heroes to locate his runaway daughter somewhere in Wroat -- and though the daughter can change her appearance at will, she was wearing an embroidered green cloak when last her father saw her.
- A fur-cloaked warrior seeks companions to retrieve his missing brother from a dangerous mountain pass.
- Rumors circulate that a vampire has taken residence in a wizard's laboratory in Aundair, but actually a wizard professor has just perfected her *cloak of the bat*.
- A dark-cloaked dwarf seeks resourceful contestants for a Six Stones match (*Sharn: City of Towers,* page 33). He'll provide the stake and a share of the profits if one of the adventurers can win.
- An elf cloaked in blue silk has been sighted using illegal illusion magic somewhere in town, and she is blamed for the recent robbery of an antique bookshop. The heroes are deputized to help find the suspect.
- As the adventurers discover a ruined tower deep in the jungle, a shifter in a battered brown cloak is seen falling from its highest point to the jungle floor below.
- Researchers from Sharn seek a mysterious warforged ranger wearing a leathery dark-blue cloak, believing him to be knowledgeable about the anatomy of cloakers.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

The Lhazaar Principalities

By Doug Beyer

The Lhazaar Principalities off Khorvaire's northeastern coast are a lawless frontier spread across a chain of unforgiving islands. The dangers of the reefs, the power-jockeying of the sea barons, and the secrets of the deep should call out to you as a DM: Lhazaar is a land of seafaring cinematic drama. Dip your toe into these adventure hooks that all take place around those mysteriousisles of the Lhazaar Principalities.

Shadows over Lhazaar

Prince Ryger ir'Wynarn dreams of uniting the Lhazaar Principalities under one banner -- his. The other princes of Lhazaar never showed interest before in handing over control of their fleets to him, but that's changing, and the change makes at least one dwarven sea-lass nervous. Talula Ironspine, captain of a small but determined fleet of ships near Orgalos Island, thought nothing of it when one pirate lord declared his fealty to Ryger, but now two other sea barons have added their fleets to his. Then came the meeting.

Talula met personally with Prince Ryger at his request, in his landside digs at Regalport. He asked for her loyalty with a charming smile, giving her the chance to throw his own wine in his face -- a gesture he did not appreciate. She was allowed to leave -- but returned to the seaport to find her flagship ablaze and many of her crew slaughtered.

Now Talula seeks revenge, and more -- a way to stop Ryger's bid for power in Lhazaar. She turns to her trusted contacts in the area, who put out the call for skilled adventurers willing and able to help Captain Talula with her mission. The adventurers who answer her call, however, may discover that Ryger has made a deal with a dark force to help convert the other princes and captains to his side -- the shadowy lich Vol, who may be using him only to consolidate power for her own evil purposes.

Scribblings of the Driggzl the Mad

Down in one of the brine-washed sea-caves along the coast of Questor Island lies the body of a gnome rogue. The unfortunate gnome's decomposing hand clutches an ancient parchment, on which some half-mad goblin scribed a series of riddles centuries ago. The gnome never finished the quest detailed in the goblin scribblings, but a party of treasure-hunting PC adventurers might be able to do just that. However the elves of House Thuranni seek information that will bring them across the heroes' path; in fact, the gnome may have died from a poison known to be used by local Thuranni agents.

Swimming the Cold Seas

A swimming race is held annually, from Cliffscrape on the mainland to the nearest shore of Tempest Isle. Only

the foolish and the hardy ever enter due to the unforgiving, cold stretch of sea between the two shores -- not to mention the hungry sea creatures who inhabit it -- but the purse, supplied by Prince Ryger, is quite handsome. The winner also earns a chance at a private audience with Ryger himself, aboard the *Dragoneye*, flagship of his Seadragons.

The Broken Scepter

"Hush, boy, and I'll tell you about the Broken Scepter of Lhazaar," says the old pirate. "It's said that, long ago, a king from far in the West had a summoner ally who called forth a demon to do the king's bidding. The demon escaped the summoner's magic, stole the king's mystic scepter, and fled for the East. A lone knight with brave heart and pure thoughts journeyed out to kill the demon and recover the scepter, and finally met up with it here in Lhazaar. The knight and demon, so the story goes, waged a battle that took them all around the isles, and in the end the knight's sword landed true and mortally wounded the demon. But in a final act of spite, the demon bit down on the scepter, shattering it with such force that the pieces were spread all around Lhazaar. Now, the idea is that the pieces are still lost, and any sea-dog with an ale in him will tell you he's found a piece or two. My guess is, if there is such a treasure, that it's probably best left unassembled. The affairs of demons are best left alone, I reckon. But that's just me."

Bloorrg the Irate Pirate

Hulking and powerful but not terribly charismatic, Bloorrg the ogre pirate captain does a good job of attacking and pillaging merchant ships in the Lhazaar Sea but a poor job of maintaining a loyal crew. That changes when he surprises and defeats a cargo ship full of dedicated wrights, furtive filchers, and iron defenders, and he suddenly gains the crew he's always wanted. Bloorrg knows enough to keep one person alive -- Salandri, the artificer who created the constructs -- and uses her to command the construct crew. Now his ship is an efficient pillaging machine, a scourge of the seas; sea barons, merchant kings and other parties have begun to take notice. The PCs may be contacted by a merchant captain looking for experts to track down Bloorrg and his unusual crew, or by a rival pirate needing backup for a planned raid of his construct pets. Perhaps a former member of Bloorrg's crew, who narrowly escaped being eaten by the irate pirate after the constructs arrived, brings the heroes a message pleading for help from the captive artificer Salandri.

Mini-Hooks

- In a fishing village on Traglorn Isle, the heroes discover evidence of an underground slave trade leading all the way to Farlnen Island.
- A mystical maelstrom between Regalport and Port Krez destroys several ships; the House Lyrandar representative who announces its danger may also be its source.
- A barmaid confides in the party that she's a landbound mermaid, and she asks for their help to break a curse that is keeping her from returning to the sea.
- A gang of sahuagin riding sea tigers (*Monster Manual III,* page 147) assaults a coastal village, and a powerful elven wizard appears to be aiding them.
- A local sea prince seeks protection for a secret project to haul up the remains of a sunken ship -- that turns out to harbor angry undead.
- A trio of dwarves of House Kundarak, their two-year-long shift at Dreadhold completed, set sail for Tantamar, but never reach the shore. Representatives of the Warding Guild in Tantamar seek help to discover what happened to them.
- A wealthy dwarf assembles materials required to complete an eldritch machine capable of raising part of the sea floor and turning the Lhazaar Isles into linked mountain chains.

Steal This Hook!

The Trials of Academia

By Doug Beyer

Welcome again to Steal This Hook! Anyone attempting to learn a skill or earn a degree in Eberron faces special challenges. In Breland, the student is just as likely as the teacher to spend part of her time as a whip-wielding relic hunter. In Aundair, a professor might demand the recovery of barely known reagents as part of a graduate exam. In Valenar, an apprentice may have to unearth ancestral treasures to move up to the next rank of journeyman. In short, students in Eberron are often *heroes* -- and therefore your PC heroes may be students. If you're ready for some academic adventure, steal these hooks that involve the *trials of academia* for your campaign!

City of the Doomsayers

One of the PCs' patrons sponsors a sociological study of the culture of doomsayers in Karrlakton, Karrn. Karrlakton is an historic city overhung with the gloom of the Mournland across the river -- cultists espousing a global apocalypse may seem more credible here. As the heroes interview cult leaders, someone seems to take offense at the attention; three assassins make an attempt on the PCs' lives. Hillerrn, an emissary from House Deneith, shows up to defend the heroes just in time, but urges them to leave the city. The secret is that a captain of House Deneith was the one who sent the assassins to scare the heroes; Hillerrn knows of a dark plot that may make the doomsayers' cries ring true.

A Royal Murder

What do a PC's graduate thesis, a small Eberron dragonshard, and a sharp masterwork rapier all have in common? They're all found in or near the body of Rubino, nephew of the King Boranel of Breland. Is the PC being framed? Did Rubino take an interest in the thesis topic? Whose rapier is it? King Boranel is grief-stricken and furious; with his resources, the case will bring the top inquisitives from all over Breland and beyond. The PC will probably have to work out what happened from a jail cell, while the rest of the party -- and a friendly gnome, who represents a citizens' rights group -- gathers evidence to prove his or her innocence. It's the crime of the century, and the heroes are right in the thick of it. . . .

Course's End

It has been a tough semester of Intermediate Spellcasting (or Infusions if you like) at the floating towers of wizardry in Arcanix, but it's just about over. Only one task remains: Complete the quest that serves as the final exam for the class. The School keeps a stocked dungeon called Course's End deep in the bowels of a floating tower, and its denizens are controlled by magic. Illusions and traps can be reset according to the strength and number of students who enter it, and monsters can be magically strengthened or weakened as appropriate. The exam-taker may brave Course's End by herself or with her party of friends, but either way the goal is the same: Use each one of her known spells (or infusions) in new and innovative ways to defeat the dangers of the dungeon. The professors will be watching.

The Teacher's Pet

The PC, a recognized student at Morgrave University, has been entrusted with the care of the professor's imp for the day. But once the professor is out of sight, the imp mutters, "I'm outta here," and vanishes. The hunt is on -- where would an imp go at the University? What's that commotion coming from the cafeteria? Has the imp taken off, or was it actually kidnapped by the Blood of Vol in an attempt to learn the professor's secrets? There *is* a now-suspicious Order of the Emerald Claw rally parading through on campus today. . . . Will the party catch the imp before the professor returns from his day of classes? Will the imp keep evading the PCs until an agent of the Order snatches it?

The Livewood Ship

The heroes are apprentices aboard a merchant ship sailing trade routes between Sharn and the coast of Xen'drik. The captain, a lusty half-orc named Shakorra, is known for making her routes days before other ships, but her last crew gave up on her -- hence the party's presence there. When Shakorra takes a sharp detour in her route, the party finds that Shakorra has been *charmed* by some presence on the ship. In fact, a dryad bound to the livewood (*Eberron Campaign Setting,* page 127) composing part of the ship has decided to change the ship's route . . . toward a dangerous forested coastline of Xen'drik.

Mini-Hooks

- The student PC's tuition, normally paid by his noble patron, was paid this semester with forged letters of credit with false arcane marks.
- Math is hard: The heroes' project is to count the number of free fastieths in the Southern Talenta Herd, so that their professor can finish his publication on their migratory patterns.
- Another student at the monastery challenges a PC to a duel, claiming dishonor due to a PC's comment about her.
- An important exam is tomorrow, and the student PC must prepare for it, but the party is summoned by a duke to join him at a formal ball in his daughter's honor -- decisions, decisions.
- The party accompanies their adventuring master on a "field trip" into the heart of Q'barra's jungle, whereupon the master is promptly stung by a native's poison dart.
- During a routine plant recognition session in the King's Forest during their botany class, seven of the party's fellow students are kidnapped by the Jungle Boys.
- The dean of Morgrave University selects twelve students to join him on a special expedition to the north coast of Argonnessen.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Unusual Jobs

By Doug Beyer

Welcome again to Steal This Hook! Today's theme is *unusual jobs*. The PCs aren't your run-of-the-mill adventurers, but then these aren't your typical hero-requiring assignments, either. The PCs can tell tales about these jobs over an ale or two at the adventurer hangouts since the assignments start out as typical errands for a rich patron but end so outlandishly that they can take even seasoned adventurers by surprise. Steal these hooks for some **Eberron** adventures outside the ordinary.

Half the Man

The PCs meet with a possible employer who has a "retrieval" mission for them. You can read aloud or paraphrase the following text:

"Thank you for meeting with me. I represent a wealthy entrepreneur who seeks recovery of a lost item. My client was exploring in the Vile Marsh area of the Shadow Marches when a creature known as a bulette surprised him and made off with the item in question. Your job is to hunt the creature and to recover the item. My client will pay handsomely for its return. Any questions?"

At this point, the PCs will probably ask about the item and other details. Use the following information to carry on the conversation:

"The item? The item to be recovered is my client's lower body. The bulette's bite severed him at the waist. The legs and pelvis should still be intact in its second stomach by now, but of course time is of the essence. Identifying characteristics for the item include the hair and muscle patterns of an adult male shifter, a curving scar on the left thigh, and a pair of dinosaur-leather riding boots with silver buckles. Should the boots be returned as well, you may expect an extra reward. Shall we discuss terms?"

If the PCs ask more questions, they receive nothing more than responses that time is of the essence and that other details concerning the client are not relevant to the task at hand.

The Faceless Twenty-Five

Heroes are used to intrigue: Most likely they've wined and dined the crime bosses, danced with royalty at the masquerade balls, started those insidious rumors about dragonmark heirs, and discovered the truth about the schemes of countless lordlings. But this time it's intrigue in another theater entirely: Mrs. Pettiwon's second grade class -- of changelings.

Feb Darrum, a changeling tradesman in Sharn's Northedge district and proud single father of one, hires the PCs to investigate his daughter. Feb's daughter Rak is one of the seven-year-olds who have barricaded themselves inside a classroom of the Northedge School for Changelings. No one is sure yet how they sealed off the exits,

but through the window above the main door one can see that the children have all swapped identities and somehow deactivated the *gems of true seeing* in the classroom. It's the sixth hour of the stalemate and the children have begun making strange demands: They want an unarmed adult unaffiliated with the school to become their liasion for further negotiations.

What's going on? Is this a childish prank or something more serious? Did the children stage this revolt on their own, or are they being manipulated -- or held hostage -- by a rakshasa posing as a teacher? Can the PCs infiltrate the classroom, discover which one is Feb's daughter, and learn the truth? Will the PCs live to regret having said yes to this job, after trying to get a straight answer out of changeling seven-year-olds?

Dungeon Blueprints

The letter, *arcane marked* with the sigil of Paelto, a wealthy old sorcerer-explorer, describes a vast dungeon riddled with the cleverest of traps, secret shifting walls, and puzzle-rooms. It shows areas guarded by the darkest of subterranean monsters, living spells, and undead. But during dinner at the Paelto's multitowered castle, he explains that the PCs are not meant to *solve* the dungeon, but to *design* it! Or, at least, they should oversee its design and offer their consultancy during the construction process. Paelto has a team of architects, engineers, and magewrights already building the sorcerer's dream dungeon. But a series of construction mishaps -- a badly configured *exploding rune*, an ahead-of-schedule release of ripe carcass crab eggs, a murdered construction foreman, and an unplanned chamber filled with the trappings of Xoriat summoning rituals -- threatens the ambitious two-year completion schedule. Paelto is excited to hear the well-traveled heroes' ideas -- and he may need their help to explore this possibly *more* dangerous half-finished dungeon.

The Evil Masterkid

The heroes are doing some hard time -- perhaps in a Thranish jail, or as part of a Blackscale chain gang in Q'barra -- after a bit of scofflaw heroics. The authorities are about to move and separate them when a mysterious patron buys up the PCs' contracts. A House Orien coach picks them up and delivers them to their new master: Banni, a thirteen-year-old human boy -- and by the looks of those eight rings on his fingers, a Silver Concordian of the Aurum. The heroes are lucky to be out of the slammer, but they aren't free; Banni intends to "allow" them to earn back the price he paid for them with a series of odd and dangerous jobs -- and to treat them like dirt in the meantime.

Banni, the heir to a guildmaster's fortune, is a spoiled brat. However, his rather naïve secret plan, only half understood even by himself, is to resurrect his father who died a year ago and to *give back* the responsibilities that were so suddenly thrust upon him. Since his father's spirit is lost somewhere in timeless Dolurrh, the only thing short of a *wish* or *miracle* that will return him is a special ritual during a triple lunar eclipse, involving the trading of five souls for the one returning. . . . Will the PCs clear their obligation to Banni and still keep their mortal souls? Have shadowy forces within the Aurum taken advantage of Banni's inherited position to trick him into creating a portal to Dolurrh? Can Banni redeem his bratty behavior and save his father?

Let No Man Put Asunder

When the young noble Unthark d'Vadalis, son of the head of House Vadalis, announces his marital engagement to the legendary Droaam hag Sora Katra, all of Khorvaire gasps collectively -- and the PCs receive an urgent note via expeditious messenger soon after. Unthark's father Dalin d'Vadalis hires them to be both wedding planners and spies for this most political and unholy of matrimonies; he needs evidence that the crafty Daughter

of Sora Kell has thrown an enchantment over his son somehow -- and if all else fails, he needs a good florist, a decorator in the Eldeen Reaches, and somebody who can play the harp.

This situation is extremely prickly -- it requires tact, subterfuge, and resourcefulness on the part of the heroes. For political reasons, Patriarch Dalin cannot seem as if he is trying to stop the marriage; in fact, he may have to work against the heroes a bit, encouraging the union to show his love for his son. However, given the Daughters' ascendant power in Droaam, in his darker moments, Dalin may actually muse what the marriage could mean for House Vadalis; the Ashbound druids have been a thorn in his side in the Reaches for some time.

Mini-Hooks

- A well-spoken goblin botanist seeks stalwart gardeners to tend his garden full of monstrous plants.
- A dying mind flayer is the only witness who saw what happened to a missing duke of Zilargo; the heroes' job is to keep the flayer alive until the case is solved.
- The PCs are hired to transport an unmarked package from Karrnath to Aundair, but due to a disastrous overland mail error, the heroes are given hatching wyvern eggs to deliver instead of legal documents.
- A lich hires the PCs as consultants to launch her public relations campaign.
- An elder exorcist of the Silver Flame, psychically scarred from all the evil he has seen, seeks adventurers for a quest to locate the "quietest, most normal town" in Khorvaire.
- A warforged ranger wants to find the largest animal companion in Darguun that he can handle (3 HD).

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Death's Chilly Hand

By Doug Beyer

Heroes survive and even prosper amid the grim dangers found in the **Eberron** setting, but the bony hand of death is always behind them. In these adventure hooks, the player characters come closer than ever before to the Keeper's cold touch -- perhaps they may even shudder under a sense of their own mortality. Enjoy.

A Glimpse of the Mourned

A young lass in the city of Vulyar, Karrnath, contacts the heroes. She asks for help locating her father Eemarch, who left for the Mournland in a huff a week ago, with the stated intention of "speaking with Drogan." Drogan was her brother who died on the Day of Mourning, so she worries that her father is mad, or worse -- that some creature is posing as the spirit of her brother Drogan.

The PCs follow Eemarch's trail into the dead-gray mist and discover the ruins of a small military barracks that recently and hastily was boarded up from the inside. Within they find Eemarch emaciated and cowering in the corner. Pages from a Sovereign Host religious text plaster the interior walls of the barracks, perhaps as a protective gesture. Discarded nearby is a pair of dark-lensed goggles. What's happening here?

Eemarch brought a pair of magic death-goggles to the Mournland because he thought they would let him see and speak to the ghost of his fallen son Drogan, but they worked a little too well. Eemarch saw so many tormented Mournland souls surrounding him when he strapped on the goggles that he went off the deep end and couldn't return home. Has Eemarch accidentally helped uncover part of the mystery of the Mournland -- and should the heroes follow up on the mystery? What other secrets of death can the PCs uncover with the goggles -- and who or what will rise up to stop them? Can Eemarch find Drogan, or has one of the Lords of Dust tricked him?

The Coffin Vault

In Xen'drik, the heroes discover the entrance to a dungeon, or so they may think. The entrance actually serves as a coffin for a famous giant that has been dead since the end of the Dragon-Fiend Wars. Perhaps tomb-looters recently pried open the entrance, or perhaps the PCs find it occupied by a cult of savage giants dedicated to the worship of their mighty forerunner. Elaborate traps wait for hapless beings in some areas of the dungeon, and cave-dwelling predators guard the vault as their adopted territory. What's more, the ancient giant was steps from attaining lichhood, and now his soul twists in agony in a half-completed necromantic ritual that has been unfinished for millennia. Perhaps the PCs help the giant by severing the strands connecting him to his bygone life, or perhaps the spilling of their blood by the resident giant cultists triggers the completion of the ritual.

Endeavors of the Dead Ancestor

In Valenar, two high-ranking Keepers of the Past {{/default.asp?x=dnd/ebds/20041011a}}, a cleric named

Quavion, and a bard called Jalanthe, share the same patron ancestor, Luchan. Each strive to outdo the other in becoming the ultimate avatar of their ancestor. In fact, Quavion and Jalanthe have dedicated their lives to researching Luchan's deeds and accomplishments. Jalanthe has a breakthrough when she discovers evidence that Luchan had a secret laboratory in the jungles of Aerenal, and she contacts the adventurers to accompany her on an expedition there. Quavion, meanwhile, hires his own expedition to beat her there, and the race is on. When the heroes' party arrives, they find some kind of dormant magical mechanism in Luchan's lab. Was Luchan close to activating an eldritch machine? Or was it finished but spent: a weapon used to fend off draconic attacks thousands of years ago? What will the PCs do when Quavion and Jalanthe, blinded by their need for attention from a dead ancestor, compete to reactivate the device?

The Halfling's Bargain

Babbin Olek is being watched. The old halfling thinks he's being stalked -- he sees a dark figure behind him as he goes about plying his jewelry trade in the city. Who is it? A pickpocket? A madman with an obsession for Olek's family? A gangster who feels he has business "protecting" the halfling's jewel stock?

The adventurers, hired by Olek to investigate the stalker, may discover that the truth is even grimmer. What Olek really thinks is that the dark figure haunting him may be someone who has learned of his bargain with a dark power -- a bargain that supposedly extended Olek's life. In fact, he thinks it might even be the Keeper personified. Babbin Olek is almost three hundred, which is over a century older than his race should live. However, his appearance is that of a mere 120-year-old. Olek's end of the bargain is that he sets a high-quality dragonshard under his pillow every year on his birthday, and it disappears when he rises in the morning. Olek's dragonshard supply is replenished by Olek's contacts in the gem trade, but the shards have apparently stopped doing the trick, because the halfling is beginning to show his age.

Who is stalking Olek? If it is someone who seeks his death, can the PCs help Olek at all? If not, who tricked an old man into believing this charade about Death ninety-nine years ago -- and is the same party responsible today? If the Keeper isn't behind it, how do the PCs account for Olek's unnatural lifespan? And where have all those dragonshards gone?

Dolurrh Slippage

Although Dolurrh is coterminous, a cleric of the Silver Flame attempts to use *raise dead* on an important fallen comrade. The divine energies of the spell attract a host of spirits from the coterminous plane of the dead, and the cleric accidentally instills the body with the wrong soul. Now the body of a hierarch of the Church of Silver Flame is possessed with the soul of -- someone. Could it be that of a shifter girl who died in her youth? Of a bored and bitter Sharn housewife and cart-accident victim? What if it's the soul of a vengeful Cultist of the Dragon Below slain by fire during a Silver Flame crusade? Or the soul of a warforged soldier who met the wrong end of an enemy wizard's *lightning bolt*? Or the soul of an infant who died at the age of two weeks? Or the soul of a worldly former Kech Shaarat general from Darguun? Or perhaps the sixty-thousand-year-old soul of an elf sorcerer who has intentionally maneuvered his way from Dolurrh into this important modern body. What will happen? How will the PCs get involved? What becomes of the hierarch's real soul? It's your campaign -- this is just the hook. . . .

Mini-Hooks

- When a rich necromancer moves into his new mansion complete with graveyard, he asks the PCs to defeat the *hallow* spell that prevents him from creating undead there.

- One of the heroes is contacted by someone claiming to be a planar traveler stuck in Dolurrh.
- Undead mind flayers twist the psychic energies surrounding a small village cemetery.
- An aging painter preoccupied with her mortality turns to a necromancer to provide a new type of canvas for her paints.
- During a school play about an old fable of the Keeper, a schoolboy goes missing -- and investigators find a bloody scythe nearby.
- A rash of suicides prompts a Sharn journalist to investigate -- and then the journalist kills himself, too.
- A powerful mage born two thousand years ago has been cheating death by combining the *clone* spell with repeated violent deaths -- she could be a villain hatching a millennial master plan or a wise sage spanning Eberron's history.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Dramatic Brawls

By Doug Beyer

Welcome again to Steal This Hook! This edition's theme is *dramatic brawls:* adventure hooks designed to get those PCs into combat in unusual environments and unpredictable conditions, possibly with campaign-altering consequences. These could work well as climactic campaign-enders with the Big Bad Guy, or simply as minor scuffles with minions and no-names. Above all, they're designed to inspire fight scenes that have the **Eberron** tone of pulp adventure.

Showdown in the Laboratory

The heroes track an unscrupulous artificer to his laboratory deep in a range of mountains. When they arrive, they see that he has equipped himself with bizarre machinery throughout his body: Hoses feed liquids to his limbs; pistons pump in and out of his shoulders; metal components embedded in his muscles move as he moves. He utters villainous curses with a smile on his lips, and begins . . . *growing*. His muscles expand and his head bloats horribly. And with the flip of a switch on his midsection, the artificer's body suddenly bristles with an array of magic weapons. He attacks the party, firing magic missiles from a wandlike appendage, shooting bolts from a tentacle-mounted crossbow, and blowing flames from an open panel in his chest. The fight should be short and destructive: The artificer drags hoses as he fights, pulling down vats of vital acids which will in turn eat away at important magical generators. The artificer's growth should be unstable -- he has put too much experimentation into his own body, and he won't be able to handle the mutation.

What led to this fight? Was part of Sharn experiencing a mystic brownout from drained power? Did multiple wizards report powerful reagents missing? Did a local village hear strange, haunting laughter from a nearby mountain pass?

What happens after the fight? Must the PCs discover the artificer's identity, or why he's done this to himself? Must they return a critical component of the artificer's body to a needy town? Must they free the kidnap victims, whose living liquids fed the artificer's unnatural experiments?

Raw Fish Rumble

The fight breaks out at Salgandro's, an expensive fish restaurant above the east bank of Breland's Dagger River. Salgandro's has twenty round tables for four and six tables for eight, and each table has a linen tablecloth and fine place settings. A kitchen outfitted with large grills and two wood-burning ovens supplies food to customers. Through the floor-to-ceiling windows on the river side, diners can see that the river tumbles 7 or 8 feet over a small waterfall -- a spectacle that diners can view from a narrow deck attached to the restaurant if they are romantically inclined. The fight might occur table to table, or back into the kitchen, or into the storage pantry in the small basement. In the center of the restaurant, Salgandro's has a columnar aquarium 10 feet in diameter, outfitted with authentic representations of Dagger River life -- fish, pebbly sediment, ropy and kelplike river plants, the underwater wooden nests of beavers. If the glass were to be smashed by a villain, it would alter the terrain significantly -- first a quick onrush of pebbly water, then a wet unstable landscape full of floating napkin

holders and flappy fish. Other details include chandeliers made from native moose antlers, lit candles on every table, fish netting decorating the walls, and proudly displayed mounts of prize river catches by the owner.

What led to this fight? Did an escaped Jungle Boy gangster flee here, seeking protection from his brother, Salgandro's head chef? Were the diners attacked by sahuagin scouts from downriver? Have assassins ambushed a scholar here who means to publish certain Emerald Claw secrets?

What happens after the fight? Do the heroes help with the cleanup? Are they chased off by the rolling-pin-waving owner, or embraced by her in gratitude? Does the bad guy dive off the deck into the river, go over the tiny falls, and disappear mysteriously into the foamy depths?

Ambushed by the Olmstoys

In a dusty subterranean crypt, the heroes find the bodies of the Olmstoys, a bygone noble family. The Olmstoys are arranged in strange, standing positions, and in some cases they still wear burial armor. When one of the PCs trips over a dust-submerged cable, it yanks some mechanism deep in the crypt walls, and a mighty magic machine is set in motion. Set in the ceiling, behind a protective iron cage, glows a blue gem that animates the Olmstoys -- and they're not happy to see the intruders. The fight that results will involve flesh-obsessed zombies, the fickle lighting of sputtering everbrights, choking clouds of dust, swarms of clicking beetles, further tripwire-and-gear traps, a decades-old living spell or two, and possibly even the matriarch of the Olmstoy family -- a grisly, level-draining wight.

What led to this fight? Were the PCs tasked to recover a burial trinket from one of the Olmstoys' bodies? Did they seek the powerful blue gem or information about the crypt's mechanisms? Did they follow a gang of shifter graverobbers here, looking to solve a mystery surrounding the sale of black-market antiques?

What happens after the fight? Does the ambush trigger the opening of even deeper tunnels into the crypt? Does a living Olmstoy relative sue for damages? Might a collector of archaeological remains contact them for help identifying each of the bodies?

The Thuranni Outpost

When the heroes' patron asks them to investigate a war-blasted, abandoned jail on the eastern edge of what used to be Cyre, it soon becomes clear that House Thuranni uses the structure as a base of operations. Trained assassins or not, the party must reconnoiter if the patron says to reconnoiter, so they get themselves into a royal rumble soon after unlocking the main gate. This fight is all about position and reach -- with all the iron-barred doors and gates, locking obstacles can impede movement while ranged spells and attacks can fire away. Most of the Thuranni agents carry skeleton keys that unlock any of the gates, but the compound is not prepared for a full-on assault from outside, so many of the gates remain unlocked. Simple bunks and footlockers hide elaborate Thuranni daggers and scrying equipment. The party may need *light* spells, since the Thuranni elves' *darkness* effects may plunge the fight into a blind scrap.

What led to this fight? Could someone posing as the party's patron have set a trap? Is House Phiarlan motivated to procure information about those other bearers of the Mark of Shadow? Does a mourning parent believe his son's remains are still hiding in the jail somewhere?

What happens after the fight? Do the PCs chase off a relatively minor squad of Thuranni elves, or do they retreat

after encountering a full-on assassins' fortress? Does the fight continue onto a hidden airship escape vehicle? Does the Big Bad Guy challenge the PCs to a final showdown in the jail's former torture chamber?

Mini-Hooks

- A wealthy halfling recluse challenges the PCs to a fight on his unstable magic chessboard.
- Twin rangers duel the PCs in the meandering tunnels of a xorn cluster.
- The heroes must enter the dreams of a tormented child for the final battle with a mind flayer.
- *Water breathing* potions in hand, the adventurers dive into churning waters where a legion of hammerhead sharks are attacking a novice swimmer.
- The heroes surprise a master swordsman stealing Riedran crysteel scimitars from an exotic weapons warehouse.
- As the party battles minions on the roof of one lightning rail train, it passes another going the other direction while speeding over a bridge -- and an enemy caster casts *fireball* on the wooden supporting trestles.
- The PCs must infiltrate an extremely confusing changeling family reunion.
- A changeling mobster attempts a getaway from Lyrandar Tower.
- Royal guards attempt to prevent the heroes from getting access to a suicidal prince on a high cliff.
- The heroes chase cultists on a rope bridge across a roaring chasm.
- In the midst of a hailstorm, the party must battle a spellcaster in the grip of a daelkyr curse.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Airship Action

By Doug Beyer

In the movies, the world of flight drips with drama: it's a world of stomach-churning stunts, devil-may-care pilots, bold midair rescues, desperate landing maneuvers, wild dogfights, and the melodramatically timed arrival of lightning storm fronts. So why not let the PCs fly those action-packed skies in your **Eberron** campaign? This edition of Steal This Hook! is packed with Eberron-style *airship action*. Enjoy.

Lord of Airships

About a month ago, when an airship flew its cargo of Riedran crysteel over the rocky peaks north of Kennrun, it disappeared. The same thing happened two months previous to an airship carrying adamantine. When House Lyrandar puts out word that they're looking for adventurers to fly a specially prepared airship to the same region, the heroes know they've found their next job. The airship they fly is bait -- it appears as a cargo transport ship and has papers logged in advance of its cargo manifest. The heroes can stay hidden in a secret compartment until the culprit shows his face. Meanwhile . . .

The Lord of Blades knows his last two airship thefts were bold. He expects the Lyrandar fools to set a trap for him. That's why he's not bothering to steal this one, but rather send it on an interesting test of piloting skills. He hopes to force it into a chasm full of dangerous outcroppings and narrow squeezes, and send a squad of warforged archers and wizards to pepper it with flaming missiles. Should the pilots aboard the craft survive that gauntlet, he intends to use the two airships he has already stolen to board and conquer.

Stowaways on the *Wistful Wanderer*

The heroes' tattered, basilisk-leather map says the treasure lies in Xen'drik. The trouble is that all harbor traffic out of Sharn has been shut down because sahuagin terrorism is at an all-time high. Luckily, one airship is steady enough to fly the whole way from Sharn to the Xen'drik mainland. The next trouble, though, is that this airship is the *Wistful Wanderer*, a gallant ship available only to well-financed explorers in good standing with Breland royalty. Luckily -- well, luckily nothing -- the PCs are out of options without a pile of gold and a note from the King. *Unless. . . .* Jimodan Runabout, a quiet dwarf friend of the heroes, hears about their intention to fly to Xen'drik. Jimodan proposes that the PCs stow away in the cargo he has been hired to accompany to the mysterious continent. It's a dangerous proposition, but the heroes have to get to Xen'drik somehow. And when Jimodan is found with his throat slit halfway through the voyage, the PCs are thrust into a dark plot a little earlier than they expected!

Exploring the Dead-Gray Clouds

In the unnatural gloom above what was once Cyre floats Aeba, a fugitive from another world. Aeba is an air elemental who has lost its way from Kythri, and its presence has caused the Mournland's dead-gray mist to swirl into a storm of mythic proportions. Most folk didn't even need that much reason to avoid plunging into the haunted air of the Mournland, but a half-orc airship captain by the name of Fled Grunlatch needs a crew to

accompany him to find Aeba as soon as possible. Fled's motivation might vary from love (Fled must rescue his young son, who was swept up in Aeba's winds during his last mission) to greed (Fled seeks the location of a famous *+4 longsword* that, according to legend, would be revealed by a "haunted storm in the golem's land") to revenge (Fled believes Aeba is a manifestation of the living *cloudkill* spell that killed his father).

Flight of the *Nightfarer*

A promising, young, changeling magewright named Arz showed no emotion when he was expelled from the prestigious Sharn Academy of Shipwrights. Or at least, the human dean of the school didn't understand the subtlety of changeling facial expressions when she gave Arz the boot; perhaps he had showed emotion after all.

Still, no one could claim surprise when a load of soarwood and several critical elemental essences went missing from the Academy the following week. They immediately blamed Arz, and although inquisitives didn't locate the missing materials, Academy officials had no worries that an unsanctioned airship might be built by someone without a dragonmark.

And yet, two months later, confused reports surface of a black airship flying on a scarcely visible (air elemental?) ring, floating up silently to a tower in Holdfast in Sharn's Middle Wards. Could Arz have completed a new, stealthy kind of airship? Is he working in concert with some other force to help damage the Academy? Or is someone framing an innocent changeling?

Mini-Hooks

- Two airships must fly close together during a driving storm to pull off a tricky midair cargo transfer.
- The PCs must stop a thief from making an airship getaway with a fortune in letters of credit.
- Talenta halflings seek polite foreigners to investigate the wreckage of an airship that crashed in the Plains -- and they specifically request the expertise of a divine scholar.
- The PCs leave the skyport in a Thrane airship, but they must arrive in Droaam in a goblin air schooner -- they'll have to create a disguise for their airship en route.
- The heroes and their airship are hired for a precarious sea rescue involving a burning elemental galleon, a cargo of throbbing cocoons, and a shoal of blood-crazed, spellwarped (*Monster Manual III*) merfolk.
- Snow blows through the holes in the rotting hull of an abandoned airship in the Frostfell -- a ship that will have to become the party's escape route when an avalanche begins.
- The army of Karrnath seeks adventurers to train as elite *feather fall* sky-warriors.
- Armed with only a harpoon and the services of a friendly lammasu (*Monster Manual*), one of the heroes must bring down the airship that is escaping with the rest of the party -- and their Emerald Claw kidnappers.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Shocking Admissions

By Doug Beyer

For an **Eberron** DM or player, the only thing better than the mystery of Eberron's conniving NPCs is that startling moment when their closeted truths become revealed. Could your campaign use a few whispered confessions, or a few scandalous proclamations, to shake up its dramatic landscape? Well, you're in luck. The theme of today's adventure hooks is *shocking admissions*. Enjoy.

For Want of a Signature

For four long years only Simas Rolf, a clerk at Thronehold, has known the truth: that a simple clerical oversight has prevented the nation of Mror Holds from being formally admitted to the historic Treaty that ended the Last War. Shocking! In official legal circles that means the Mror Holds doesn't exist as a nation, which could spell disaster if Mror's enemies find out and invade the borders of the unrecognized territory. Simas contacts the PCs with a cryptic letter urging them to come to Thronehold as quickly and quietly as they can, promising a special favor if they can help. As soon as they arrive, Simas tells the heroes that since he can't fetch the signature himself, he needs them to run a series of documents to one Jakil ir'Wynarn for her crucial signature. Getting that signature may be difficult, however; Jakil turns out to be off on a diplomatic mission to Valenar and will be surrounded by elven dignitaries.

Can the PCs get the signature Simas needs before someone learns the truth? Might the Aurum's spies -- or a lurking mind flayer villain -- have caught wind of the oversight? What will the dwarves of the Holds do -- and whom will they blame -- if *they* find out? Might they even go to war?

Of the Wagging of Tongues

Notorious gossip-monger Salacious Sowla has spread rumors about Sharn's dignitaries and celebrities for over twelve years in her column at the *Hightower Gazette*. A crotchety hag and Sharn institution, she prides herself on being the first name in the world of scandal -- but the *Gazette's* readership has been in decline, and no other paper has accepted her offer of service. That's why she's cooked up some news of her own -- her announcement of her own scandalous confession, promised in last week's *Gazette*. If all goes according to plan, rag columnist Salacious Sowla will in two days admit to being the mother of one of Sharn's young elite, a shocking turn that will turn her own life upside down -- not to mention the lives of the child and the father, if it's true . . .

And it *is*, which is why the heroes are suddenly in contact with a Mr. Dorus Garbecker of a well-to-do neighborhood of Sharn, and his well-thought-of son Elliod.

Will the PCs help Dorus and Elliod silence Salacious Sowla? Will Mr. Garbecker supply a bribe to buy Sowla out, or will that not be enough? What might the *Hightower Gazette's* editor, Argrus Two-Fist, have to say about the matter? What got Mr. Garbecker involved with Sowla toward the end of the Last War?

It's Not Always Good When Siblings Share

A PC receives a letter from his or her mother in the form of dictated *magic mouth* messages attached to a series of small ornate stones. The stones are bundled with another, separate, written letter. The *magic mouth* on each stone works in a certain order once unbundled and says the following overall:

"My dearest son, how fare you? Have you found exciting adventures? I -- well, this stone holds only a short message; I must be brief.

"We treasure both you and your loving sister, who travels the world doing her paintings. You bring honor to the family. But your sister is. . . .

"We've found out that while seemingly exploring her art, your sister has actually been studying -- I dare not use the word villainy -- how about invention?

"It involves mystic rituals and starry alignments too awful for your old mother to conceive. We're afraid for what she might do, son.

"She writes that it's something to do with -- demons, in the Shadow Marches, and some event or prophecy she wants to come to pass.

"Please help, son. She must be out of her mind, possessed, or something worse --! We've sent along her letter. Time is of the essence!

"Your father says hello. Send my love to the rest of your friends. I love you -- goodbye!"

The *magic mouth* spell ends, and only the parchment letter from the PC's sister remains to be opened.

You Knew One About Changelings Would Show Up!

The newly appointed head legislator of your campaign's main city, Jonn Hodrin, has announced that he is not human. He is actually a changeling, he said during yesterday's press conference, and he proved it by transforming briefly into a female half-orc and back. He also announced sweeping reform to the city's laws regarding changelings, including using his powers to reduce the sentence of anyone currently imprisoned for "illegal shapeshifter impersonation."

Thing is, local reporter Plazzl Sweetblossom doesn't believe him.

Plazzl, a suspicious young gnome working the investigative beat at the local paper, recruits a selection of well-recommended heroes to help her investigate Hodrin and his claim. Could Hodrin be some other sort of shapeshifter, such as a doppelganger or rakshasa? Could the real Hodrin be tied up somewhere, while this changeling impersonates him? Finding the truth may require tracing Hodrin's roots back to his birthplace in your favorite far-off town. Or is Plazzl looking for facts that aren't there, either due to a bum hunch or the malicious desire to unseat an innocent changeling activist?

Mini-Hooks

Here are some *shocking admissions* mini-hooks to get your DM creativity started.

- The heroes' patron discloses to them her draconic ancestry.
- A shifter rogue claims to have been part of a pact with two important figures, implicating them in a dark conspiracy that connects with the devastation of Cyre.
- A murder suspect confesses, but the one he loves comes forward and contradicts his confession by admitting her own guilt.
- A series of letters is discovered that gives evidence that Baron Elvinor Elorrenthi d'Phiarlan of Aundair (page 144 of the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*) and a now-dead kalashtar Keeper of the Word from Adar (page 221 of the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*) were secret lovers over two hundred years ago.
- A centuries-old dragonmarked man is not elvenkind as he claimed, but something much darker.
- The nation of Thrane announces that it has continued creating warforged in the four years since the Last War, in open opposition of the Treaty of Thronehold.
- A desperate young halfling begs for the PCs' help, revealing that he is the thief the Brelish army is looking for.
- A girl in the employ of King Kaius III is murdered on her way to betray his dark secret.
- A noted public official comes out in favor of forbidden practices he learned from a Blackscale lizardfolk tribal chief.

About the Author

Doug Beyer spent a lot of time getting philosophy degrees until he figured out that he should just move to Seattle and become a web developer for Wizards of the Coast. Now he spends his days working on games and his evenings playing them. Doug uses the time normally allotted for sleeping to lurk on the Wizards.com message boards as his alter ego, WotC_Doog.

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Steal This Hook!

The Inescapable Past

By Doug Beyer

If your players are the types who write out detailed histories of their characters, complete with childhood memories, tales of favorite relatives, and apprenticeship anecdotes, then great. You already have a character sheet full of hooks to steal for your campaign -- loved ones to get into trouble, old contacts to reintroduce, and other details to spin in dramatic directions (my **Eberron** group has been nice in this regard). But if they aren't the history-writing types, then today's Steal This Hook! is for you. It's full of ideas to connect the PCs to an *inescapable past* -- which both builds continuity and verisimilitude to the campaign, and lends to the players a sense of personal stake and urgency to motivate their play. If you're just starting a campaign, you could suggest ideas from here to plant juicy details in their backgrounds from the start. Steal away!

Letter from a Brother

The Fraternal Order of Uruvites -- that twelve-member club to which one of the PCs belonged during his school years -- was more an excuse to drink, laugh, and complain about the trials of young life than an "enlightened order of philosophically-minded neo-romantics," as their charter avowed. Still, the PC has fond memories of the elaborate regulations they established, the songs they composed at the Bluebuck Tavern, and the high-minded and thoroughly ridiculous oath they took never to abandon the principles of Uruv, an obscure, ancient essayist who wrote on subjects such as fraternal love and the pursuit of knowledge.

So what a surprise to hear from Olaf Egbees, an old friend and fellow Uruvite, so many years after they'd all gone their separate ways. The PC cracks open the letter and may read about . . .

. . . a hastily-called reunion back at the old Bluebuck? Perhaps a warning about a traveling investigative journalist sure to try to contact the PC about the Order? A plea for protection from some of the other members? A message from a white dragon scholar with an unexplained interest in the essayist Uruv? News of the sudden deaths of three of their members?

The Doomsooth Plaque

It all starts with an ornate, platinum plaque found on the back of a dead warforged.

A translation error from the plaque's draconic message leads to a rash announcement that a demonic force will fall on Breland in the coming weeks. A messenger is dispatched to find one of the PCs, whose mother, Aidin, was Breland's foremost scholar on planar conjunctions and daelkyr invasions -- before she disappeared nine years ago. The hero is forced to endure an excruciating walk down memory lane as the case of Aidin's disappearance is reopened, and the rest of the party becomes drawn in as well. The heroes discover that a number of Aidin's personal belongings were seized inappropriately after her disappearance, and signs point to the involvement of a reclusive baron.

The clock is ticking on the plaque's promise of demonic incursion -- or is it? Could the PCs decipher the plaque's

true meaning? Was the prophetic announcement a plot to divert public attention away from a more subtle evil? What killed the warforged, and why was it fitted with the plaque? What is the truth behind Aidin's disappearance, and could it be somehow related to the age of the plaque, the shadowy baron, and an unfinished research project on the nature of the daelkyr?

The Marked Mentor

A dragonmark can be a painful, confusing development in a young PC's life. It can mean a sudden burden of responsibility, a change of social status, strange and unfocused new powers, and of course physical disfigurement, any of which can traumatize a youth already bracing for onrushing adulthood.

That's why the arrival of Jiv d'Deneith was so comforting. The tall, grey-bearded Defenders Guild soldier with the booming laugh arrived when he heard the young PC had manifested a dragonmark, and regaled him or her with stories of his own painful and often hilarious transition into being dragonmarked. The old warrior stayed in town for several weeks, teaching the PC many things about the new mark, new responsibilities, and new gifts the PC now faced, and when he gave his farewell, he promised that their paths would cross again.

Well, they have, but not under good circumstances -- why? Is old Jiv under attack from a political assassination plot from inside Deneith? Is he dying and looking for old friends to go on one last adventure into Q'barra, where his brother disappeared? Does he need the PC's expertise in deciphering a sticky scroll that proves to be from his beholder nemesis?

Scar from a Scoundrel

The PC touches her neck and feels the scar under her fingers. As she and the other heroes descend, step by damp granite step, into the dungeon, memories of an ex-lover's promises, delivered in silver-tongued, Lhazaar-accented Riedran {{link href="/default.asp?x=dnd/ebds/20050502a"}}, well up. Why does she remember these words now? Not because the promises were broken long ago. Not because the scoundrel fled Zil authorities after holding her at knifepoint. But because the carvings on the dungeon entrance match that scoundrel's family crest.

As the party explores a dungeon on an item-recovery mission from their patron, the PC remembers that she has a past with an unscrupulous rogue whose family owns the property. Is this an opportunity for lover's revenge? A way to take from the man who took her heart, or to heal (or repay!) that scar she earned during his escape years ago? What item could they be searching for here in the scoundrel's family vaults? What crime had he done that caused the Zil gnomes to seek him out all those years ago, and what punitive fallout did the PC endure on his behalf? Might she find evidence of his current whereabouts among the dungeon's dangers?

Mini-Hooks

Here are some *inescapable past* mini-hooks to get your DM creativity started.

- A shifter PC's family feud with another shifter clan comes to light when a weretouched master declares war on the party.
- A PC's estranged twin catches up with the party -- and invites them to join his cult of the Mockery.
- A PC family's heirloom crysteel axe surfaces at a crime scene.
- When the skinless skull of a pre-Galifar king is discovered, the evidence suggests he was murdered by an advisor -- distantly related to one of the PCs.

- A con-artist changeling poses as a PC's sister, but doesn't realize he's posing as the sister who died of illness during the end of the Last War.
- A distant uncle's will grants the PC a tract of land in the Shadow Marches.
- A Blacksteel lizard man chieftain, killed by the PC's mentor, roams Khorvaire as a zombie until he can exact revenge on the PC himself.
- The baby roc that the PC cared for as a child has returned as an adult.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

The Tyrannical Eye

By Doug Beyer

Hey, you there, DM! Got your eye on the beholder page of the *Monster Manual*? Found yourself chuckling maniacally at an eye tyrant mini you found in a *Deathknell* booster? Picked up a copy of *Lords of Madness* and can't wait to inflic -- er, incorporate it into your campaign? Then today's Steal This Hook! is for you. Today's theme is *the tyrannical eye*: all beholder hooks, all the time. Enjoy. (Note: This article relies heavily on material found in *Lords of Madness: The Book of Aberrations*.)

Kragxulashtut's Greedy Gaze

The floating towers of Arcanix support a connoisseur's array of mystical literature. Somewhere between a wizard's library and a magic history museum, the Wadrugan Display is proctored by a stern gnome by the name of Milia Wadrugan. Together with her assistant, a human lad named Draph, Milia works hard to encourage wealthy and influential clients to lend their rare magic relics to the display so that she can provide those relics the public attention they deserve. That's why the young assistant Draph is worried, now that Milia has, without explanation, packed up several of the most ancient and rare exhibits and taken them down into the storage cellar. Draph wonders whether he should contact someone to investigate Milia's cellar, but at first he decides against it.

Then the half-eaten and bloody remains of the mage MacNagus, the Wadrugan Display's top arcane scholar, are found near the back of the cellar. Draph contacts the PCs to investigate.

Milia Wadrugan has been *charmed* by a resident beholder named Kragxulashtut. Kragxulashtut has fed its magical energy needs by gazing upon the delicious variety of magic items that come through the Wadrugan Display. Recently, though, it has decided it dislikes hiding in the lair under the cellar and has begun venturing out to explore. MacNagus met his fate by running into the beholder on one of its recent topside jaunts. Will the PCs fare better?

A Twisted Tyrant Tale

A cult of beholder-worshipers, led by a corrupt council of humans and dwarves, takes over a small, rural Karrnathi town and begins making converts. A local magistrate hires adventurers to bring him the leaders of this cult, dead or alive, and offers them an extra reward if they can slay the beholder behind it all as well. But there are many layers to this onion. First of all, the PCs find evidence that there may *be* no beholder behind the cult at all -- it could be only a system of influence to control the lesser cultists and a few showy illusion spells to fake the beholder's presence. But then the heroes discover a beholder's lair after all, which leads them to suspect that the

resident beholder may have spread rumors of its own nonexistence out of acute paranoia.

But then the "beholder lair" may in turn be window-dressing for an elaborate ruse that the heroes trace back to the magistrate who hired them: *He* may be the true leader of the beholder-cult after all, or an abolisher (aberration hunter) using the heroes to flush out the eye tyrant, or the devotee of an insanely jealous rival beholder. Will the PCs uncover the truth? Will there actually be a beholder somewhere in the story, or just regular people using the terror of the eye tyrant as a weapon against each other?

Passages Below Eldeen

Druids in the Eldeen Reaches have gone mad. Complaining of a dreadful "music" gnawing at their minds, one by one they have succumbed to drooling catatonia. When the heroes investigate, they find a growing hive city of a few beholders and beholderkin under the forest floor. The beholders carve round, twisting tunnels through the earth using their *disintegrate* eyebeams, bringing dark energies to the jungles above and ravaging the natural order. When a powerful Gatekeeper druid and a tribe of shifters agree to join the heroes in assaulting the hive city, the PCs know they'll be in for an epic battle.

Encounter at Dreadwaste

The ragged but resolute heroes claw their way through the clue trails and the plotted encounters until they reach, at last, the lair of the black dragon Dreadwail. They enter the wyrm's sleeping chamber, only to find, to their surprise, an immense elder orb (*Lords of Madness,* page 41) with knuckly eyestalks and putrid, moss-covered skinplates, feasting on the remains of the wyrm they hunted. Eleven pupils, ten of them round and curious, the central one thin and evil, swivel around to regard them, and the needle-rimmed mouth emits a hissing, shrieking roar of rage.

But let's back up a bit -- what got the PCs into this mess? Could they be chasing a reward for destroying a troublesome young dragon when they run into the elder orb? Could the beholder have had an ongoing territorial dispute with Dreadwail, or a taste for dragon meat? Could the PCs have already discovered evidence that a long-lived beholder had taken residence in this countryside, or even have tricked the orb into entering Dreadwail's lair first? Or could the beholder be a ranking member of a daelkyr army forming against Khorvaire's aloof dragonkind?

Mini-Hooks

Here are some *tyrannical eye* mini-hooks to get your DM creativity started.

- A sane beholder (*Lords of Madness,* page 48) proposes to reveal the location of a hoard of dragonshards in exchange for citizenship in Breland.
- An artificer thinks he has discovered the key to preserving the strength of dead beholder bone; he requires multiple specimens of beholderkin to test his theories.

- A changeling rogue uses trickery to lure youths to a gas spore lair where he can loot valuables from the spores' victims.
- Two spectators (*Lords of Madness,* page 140) engage the party in a battle of philosophical riddles in exchange for the key to a necromancer's laboratory.
- A young bodyguard of House Medani seeks aid in finding the blue-spotted beholder who *charmed* his mistress, a baroness.
- A beholder mage uses its network of spies and assassins to gather artifacts related to the Draconic Prophecy.
- An immense beholder raids a winery, consuming half of its season's vintage and contaminating the other half with some vile excretion.
- An irate, pregnant beholder seeks a Sharn sewer to begin its horrific birthing process.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Relics of a Bygone Age

By Doug Beyer

No **Eberron** campaign would be complete without the hunt for history-shaking relics uncovered from dust-choked temples and sinister dungeons. Whether the PCs are on a mission from Morgrave, doing work for the Wayfinders, or questing for the quori, they're sure to love tracking down these *relics from a bygone age*. Enjoy.

Trouble with Transformations

In a shack in the Shadow Marches lives a mean-spirited kalashtar woman named Jaglwurt (also known as Jaggle-Wart, Jigglyworm, and the Terrible Jugworth, depending on which bard one asks). Jaglwurt was originally a green hag: She was transformed by a *deck of transformations* (see page 178 in *Races of Eberron*, or substitute a *deck of many things*), but she remains evil to the core. After drawing -- but surviving -- two other nonbeneficial cards (DM's choice), she became so enraged that she now lives only to lure others into drawing cards from the *deck*.

Jaglwurt has many strategies for trapping others into drawing. She may distribute false treasure maps leading to the *deck's* swampy hiding place, letting their own greed do the rest. She may send distress letters, luring heroes to her shack where she asks them to free her from a spell by drawing from the *deck*. She may use her attractive kalashtar form to her advantage and enter small towns while posing as a fortune teller with a mundane deck of cards.

Several cards are missing from Jaglwurt's *deck of transformations*; prepare your deck accordingly. And of course, Jaglwurt becomes extremely angry if a PC receives a beneficial effect from her *deck*.

The Ancient Sandstone Wurm

A desert-dwelling tribe of Talenta halflings has worshiped a lizardlike living artifact called Usut that has swum the sands of their desert for generations. Hentarr, a slave trader and warmonger of the tribe, pressures the tribe's leader to destroy Usut, to free them from its rule. When Hentarr's daughter Soleema promises Usut the blood of ten of the tribe's children in exchange for power for her father, the tribe's leader calls for the PCs to help stop her. The plot thickens when it turns out that Usut is simply an earth elemental and has been manipulated by the tribe's leaders with a *stone of controlling earth elementals* to help them maintain tribal power.

The Mystery of Blessedwater Lake

The small town of Blessedwater is up in arms. Their formerly clear and tranquil lake, the source of their economy and cornerstone of their religious ceremonies, now oozes with acidic, rusty slime. Kowol, presiding cleric of the Sovereign Host in Blessedwater, puts the call out for adventurers to investigate. When the heroes answer the call, they find that the source of the water's corruption is a submerged *gate* through which raw, energetic evil has seeped. The *gate* leads not to another plane, but to a dungeon infected by an artifact belonging to the Age of Monsters.

The Invisible Skein

Two scouting patrols originating from Fort Light in Thrane are lost, perhaps dead, and the heroes are called in as a rescue party. The patrols' trail goes dead in the thick of the nearby pine forest -- but that's where the heroes notice the crows. Creepy crows roost shoulder-to-shoulder in long lines, forming patterns across multiple trees. From any one angle the crows' patterns are unrecognizable, but from a combination of perspectives, or from one high above the trees, a shape emerges. Are the crows drawn to invisible lines of force generated by a long-lost, subterranean artifact? Do the lines form the shape of a dragonmark or the web of some otherworldly spider-thing? Will the crows point the way to the missing patrols or ensnare the party in the same trap that captured the soldiers -- or both?

Mini-Hooks

Here are some *relics from a bygone age* mini-hooks to get your DM creativity started.

- A young shifter mother accompanies the heroes on a quest to purify a weapon that shamed her troubled people.
- A member of the Cult of the Dragon Below -- posing as an official of House Jorasco -- seeks adventurers to recover a lost dragonmark scepter (see page 173 of *Races of Eberron*).
- Daelkyr minions invade a lonely outpost to steal a legendary byeshk dagger capable of doing great harm to their masters.
- A mad artificer crams an inert Xen'drik artifact full of dragonshards, with disastrous consequences.
- Two evil medallions influence their dragonmarked wearers, encouraging them to lay waste to their surroundings.
- A secret force of Cairdal Blades from Aerenal infiltrates a nearby church, looking for clues about a lost suit of armor.
- A community of Last War veterans seeks adventurers to recover a tattered war banner recently stolen by hobgoblins.
- A conspiracy involving mind flayers, House Lyrandar, and an elite force of changeling rogues threatens to uncover a plane-altering artifact.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Mini-Hook Madness

By Doug Beyer

Need a bunch of Eberron adventure ideas, and need them fast? Looking for the perfect hook to your campaign's next chapter, but don't have the seconds to commit to reading an entire paragraph of text? Well don't blink, frantic DM, because today's long-on-variety, short-on-attention-span edition of Steal This Hook! is about to turn on the juice. Sit back and let the Eberron one-liners flow: Today's theme is *mini-hook madness*. Enjoy.

1.A scandal in the Eldeen Gatekeeper community involving a half-burnt, bark-bound tome requires a consultation with the greatpine Oalian.

2. Prince Ryger of Lhazaar hires the PCs to investigate the mysterious mist of the Gray Tide, which the prince's advisors believe may be a manifest zone of an unknown plane.

3. A loremaster's research seems to indicate that one of the PCs plays a crucial role in the draconic Prophecy.

4. A black-striped clawfoot dinosaur recently ate a halfling patrolman -- along with his unique and important bejeweled key.

5. A patron offers this advice to a PC in need of moral guidance: Travel to the Seven Caves in Darguun, avoid the goblinoids and wyverns, and meditate among the swirling dragonmarks of the caves until an omen appears.

6. The Breland crown sponsors a fencing and archery tournament with the hidden agenda of rooting out a famous thief.

7. A changeling is unjustly burned at the stake in a Thrane village, sparking a revolt of a surprising number of changeling residents.

8. A mysterious cult of chaos-worshipers conspires to destroy an ancient *dimensional seal* in the Shadow Marches, threatening to unlock a manifest zone tied to the chaotic plane of Kythri.

9. An avalanche uncovers the ruins of a dead civilization of giants in Frostfell -- and awakens their elemental minions.

10. The PCs receive information that a disguised rakshasa will attend the coronation ceremony of a prince in Aundair.

11. The bones of a lich come up at auction in Sharn, and a shadowy agent hires the PCs to bid on his organization's behalf -- but the agent is found dead after they win the remains, and many factions turn their eyes to the heroes.

12. One of the PCs finds out that her heritage links her to the family of a pre-Galifar king, and that only one rival duke stands between her and a fortune in lands and title.

13. The Marguul league of bugbear tribes sends a force of guerrilla warriors to threaten towns in eastern Zilargo -- but a scholar in Zalanberg suspects their efforts are meant only to distract from a more serious threat to come.

14. A well-disguised warforged serial killer lurks somewhere in bustling Korranberg.

15. After a House Kundarak noble is found with a blade slipped between his ribs, a dwarven banker's union in Korunda Gate blames House Sivis and vows revenge.

16. A Last War historical society discovers that a thirty-year-old mission undertaken by Breland troops came back missing a vital wartime artifact.

17. Unknown to the heroes, powerful forces including agents of the Chamber, the Aurum, and King Kaius conspire to get the party on board an ill-fated ship to Xen'drik.

18. A woman needs help getting her cat down out of the branches of a treant.

19. The captain of a small town's constabulary needs help locating the artificer who must be behind a rash of attacks and thefts perpetrated in the town by wordless homunculi.

20. A beholder's minions, posing as the assistants of a Sharn artificer, hire the party to locate components for a horrific eldritch device.

21. Morgrave University has contracts with the PCs *and another* party of adventurers to recover a cherished relic from a Q'barra ruin -- the race is on, and the winner gets an even bigger contract.

22.The City Watch is hiring anyone who can catch gangs of airborne gladiators who fight over Sharn's rooftops on *flying carpets* and spider eaters.

23. A squad of thieves uses *circles of sound* (*Eberron Campaign Setting,* page 271) to coordinate an especially well-orchestrated hit-and-run mugging on the heroes, making off with a cherished magic weapon.

24. When three of the Church of the Silver Flame faithful go missing on separate pilgrimages to Flamekeep, a fourth pilgrim hires the PCs to protect him on his journey.

25. A Karrnath businessman has purchased a tract of farmland believed to be haunted, and he is hiring brave souls to investigate; he doesn't tell them that he knows most of the ghosts personally.

26. A case of mistaken identity lands one of the PCs in deep trouble with the Karrnath authorities; a changeling or doppelganger may be responsible for the mix-up.

27. An elven couple goes missing near the entrance of a dungeon infested with living spells.

28. A Gatekeeper initiate summons the heroes to the Shadow Marches to investigate a mining operation that is

channeling dragonshards to an unknown partner.

29. A PC discovers that a lost relic belonging to her family is on sale at a New Cyre marketplace, and the party traces it back to Ikar the Black's unscrupulous salvage gang (*Eberron Campaign Setting,* page 189).

30. The PCs receive word that a medusa assassin has stowed away on board an airship on its way to Sharn.

31. A shifter child begins seeing visions and speaking in an unknown tongue after nearby trees and crops become stricken with a mysterious withering disease.

32. The heroes track a rogue's associates to Festering Holt in the Demon Wastes and discover an underground slave trade stealing humanoids from Eldeen.

33. A legend of a woodland witch who grants wishes kindles interest in one area of the Eldeen Reaches.

34. A cabal of worshipers of the Mockery infiltrate a mountain outpost in the Mror Holds, then betray and conquer it, sending mock communiqués to a second, nearby outpost.

35. The PCs are hired to uncover a smuggling ring led by a greedy mind flayer and to locate a precious locket belonging to Zil royalty.

36. A warforged with silver tracery (*Races of Eberron,* page 120) seeks adventurers to help him defeat an unusually well-equipped pack of werewolves.

37. Ancient Orc cave markings indicate the coming of an astrological event that may awaken a slumbering evil.

38. An undying councilor awakens from its plane-roaming slumber with prophetic knowledge about a lost vault where several couatls are imprisoned.

39. An apparently sincere rakshasa approaches the PCs, claiming the need for redemption for his past deeds.

40. The heroes chase a symbiont-grafted miscreant across Breland, Thrane, and into the decayless wilds of the Mournland, hoping to learn the dark secret only he knows.

41. A blackguard constructs a massive chessboard in his lair, and then he collects prisoners from Thrane to act as his living chess pieces.

42. The signet ring of a House Deneith warmaiden has become possessed by a fiend (*Eberron Campaign Setting,* page 100) who is intent on discovering secrets of the Defenders Guild.

43. The adventurers must foil a Dreaming Dark plot to destroy the enchantments that hold aloft the floating towers of Arcanix.

44. An artificer needs protection for his shipment of soarwood over a dangerous mountain pass.

45. A bard appears out of thin air, wounded and haggard, in the center of a small town, claiming to have been

transported from a brutal land full of vicious monsters; he asks for help before he is transported back again.

46. A cultist of Vol secretly *charms* a Sharn street-gang leader, changing the gang's agenda from vandalism and petty theft to one of kidnapping and secret blood rituals.

47. The heroes need information from fire giant Gorodan Ashlord (*Eberron Campaign Setting,* page 166) before they can begin a relic-hunting expedition to Xen'drik.

48. The party is aboard a lightning rail train that whizzes by its first stop; they realize the braking mechanism has been sabotaged and that entering the next station at that speed will cause a deadly crash.

49. An adept who does missionary work in the dangerous Mournland sends a letter professing his capture by the Lord of Blades.

50. Three divisive brothers choose different faiths -- one the Church of the Silver Flame, one the Order of the Emerald Claw, one the Cult of the Dragon Below -- and each causes turmoil among his peers by plotting to convert the others.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Forged in War

By Doug Beyer

The warforged are living constructs parented by both technology and magic. (For more rules and details on warforged, consult the recent Dragonshards: The Warforged Part 1 and Part 2, as well as August's Rules of the Game. Eberron's warforged now face soul-testing conditions of almost excruciating freedom, having been freed from the structure and purpose of the Last War, and they have responded by adapting to those conditions with the single-mindedness, assurance, and ingenuity that only warforged can muster. Today's *forged in war* focuses on these synthetic citizens of Eberron and the adventures that blossom so naturally around them.

Etched with Mystery

The dying wish of old Farlan d'Cannith is for six of his warforged creations to be reunited. Forged a few years before the end of the Last War, all have different classes and aptitudes, and many fought briefly for Breland before the Last War ended. To make them special, a hand-engraved plate was fitted on their backs, and a master engraver and scholar named Urtus Vorm created each one. Farlan d'Cannith wants to see these warforged brethren united again, so he hires the PCs to find the six warforged and bring them to d'Cannith's deathbed.

The warforged have scattered all over Khorvaire after the War. One is still in Breland, tending a glassware shop; one has taken up druidism in the Eldeen Reaches; two have found night watch work in Karrnath, but have recently become involved in organized crime; one is believed to be a hermit somewhere outside Korranberg. The last one died somewhere in Thrane during a lightning rail accident.

The plates on the backs of the warforged line up to form an intricate design. Once the PCs reunite (at least the bodies of) the six warforged, it becomes clear that the engraved design is actually a map. Although Farlan d'Cannith dies before he sees the living maps reunited, House Cannith and Farlan's estate hire the party to follow up on the map and the now-interesting metalworker Urtus Vorm.

The Escapee

As the heroes travel down a lonely road, a gaunt and badly damaged warforged stumbles into view. He utters a mechanical moan and collapses, revealing that he has been missing a leg for some time. If the PCs can revive him, he tells the story of how he has just escaped

from years of illegal postwar imprisonment at a nearby military fort. He has escaped now only by partially -- and painfully -- disassembling himself so as to fit through the bars of his dungeon cell. He asks the heroes' help in retrieving the missing parts of himself, including a leg and several pieces of his once-bulky frame, and in exposing the war crimes going on at the fort.

Dreaming of an Old War Buddy

A warforged named Flail is the devious but loyal right-hand man to Bzakkus, an Inspired agent of the Dreaming Dark. Together they sow evil on the streets of Trolanport in Zilargo, dealing in mind-bending plots, information trades, and assassinations to accomplish the mysterious ends of the quori.

During the investigation of an execution-style killing of a local Trolanport magistrate, a warforged constable named Trident discovers a gold pendant near the scene of the crime (or if there's a warforged PC in the party, that PC can find the pendant instead). He recognizes the pendant as a symbol of the infantry unit under which he served in the Last War -- meaning Trident could know the killer personally. The pendant was dropped by Flail during one of his recent assassinations for his Inspired master.

Trident and his fellow Trolanport constables hire the PCs to help them find this errant warforged, which leads them to discover Bzakkus and Flail and their malevolent schemes, drawing them into a dark cloak-and-dagger-with-psionics underworld.

The Unholy Thirst

A series of gruesome blood-drainings leads the Sharn City Watch to hire the party to hunt down a vampire. However, the more they investigate, the more it becomes clear that the warforged Thirst, minion and cultist of the Blood of Vol, is instead responsible. What has caused this powerful warforged to join the side of Vol? Could Vol leaders have taken advantage of the lack of warforged goals in the wake of the Last War, filling Thirst with their own wicked aims? Could Thirst's ghulra (magical forehead sigil) have been altered, somehow rearranging the living construct's moral code? Might Vol cultists have possession of something Thirst needs, so they're blackmailing him into working toward their cause? Or is Thirst simply an evil soul, dedicated to the destruction of Khorvaire's new world order by bringing about the birth of some avatar of darkness?

Mini-Hooks

- Two warforged criminals stow away on a Lhazaar merchant ship by attaching themselves to the *underside* of its hull, which allows them to plunder its shipment of Valenar gold.
- Although not illegally creating new warforged, an evil elven wizard/artificer has been outfitting golems with components similar to those of warforged, such as wand sheaths for *wands of color spray*.
- Merrix d'Cannith, son of the inventor of the first true living warforged, disappears -- and the Lord of Blades claims responsibility for his kidnapping.
- A warforged cleric of the Sovereign Host seeks companions for an expedition into Xen'drik to gather lore about ancient sentient constructs.
- Frustrated with political corruption, a small town seeks to elect a warforged mayor, and it sends delegates

to larger cities seeking candidates.

- A fiend somehow inhabits the *battlefist* of a warforged Last War veteran and leads him to commit evil acts.
- Llesh Haruuc readies a warforged titan to lead a preemptive attack on the gnomes of Zilargo, to solidify his power among the goblinoid tribes of Darguun.
- A war historian believes a unit of warforged troops may be buried -- alive and conscious -- somewhere under the sewers of Sharn.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Plane-Shaking Events

By Doug Beyer

The drama-dial gets turned up to eleven in today's edition of Steal This Hook! Eberron lays the foundation for a host of sinister plots, epic adventures, and a rollicking session of **D&D**. But it's just the start. You, with your vast DM powers, have the opportunity to twist Eberron's history as you see fit, introducing new villains, upsetting the course of the Khorvaire political landscape, and even contradicting any detail of the setting you feel is ripe for change. Today we provide some inspiration for these shocking departures with some truly momentous happenings; today's theme is *plane-shaking events*.

The Flame Flickers

The holy Keeper of the Flame, young Jaela Daran (***Eberron Campaign Setting***, page 206), has proclaimed that the pillar of metallic fire known as the Silver Flame must move from its historic location in Thrane. The PCs travel to Thrane for the momentous construction of the airship *Flamehost*, the vessel that will carry the Flame to its new home in Xen'drik (or an exotic locale of your choosing). The heroes may be there to help safeguard the airship's construction or to oversee the religious ramifications of the move, but they find themselves in the middle of a murder mystery.

Twohen Jamhus, head magewright of the *Flamehost* project, is found dead at his drafting table. Jaela herself summons the heroes to help solve the mystery. Is a rival archbishop of the Silver Flame so opposed to the move of the sacred Flame that he'll stoop to murder? Has a rogue political element in Thrane decided to stop the shift in power that the move would represent? Has one of Jamhus's peers resorted to dire methods to gain the spotlight in the construction project? The PCs trace clues to an ancient, hidden catacomb under Flamekeep where dust, cobwebs, and slumbering evil guard a key to the mystery...

The Bane from Khyber

A gray-bearded druid named Berannidamus summons the heroes to show them a new threat in the Demon Wastes. He gathers them around a stone cauldron bubbling with a blackened stew of berries, bones and blood, and chants into the choking smoke. In the fumes, the heroes see the shapes of unholy creatures in intricate formation, marching to an uncertain destination. They see two grim faces -- one a dark-striped rakshasa with ice-cold eyes, the other a distinguished human surprisingly similar in features to King Kaius III of Karrnath. They see trees falling, homes crumbling under an arsonists' blaze, and the bones of innocents filling the continent of Khorvaire.

What evil has risen from the dark folds of the earth? Have the Lords of Dust made a pact with a willing mortal to

enable the release of one Khyber-trapped rajah? What does this new enemy represent to the nearby nation of Eldeen, or indeed to all of Khorvaire? What are the first steps to this villain's destructive plan, and what forces can the PCs marshal to help stop it? What hindrances will the PCs face, and what sacrifices will they have to suffer to overcome them?

Quake in the City of Towers

Sharn is shaken by earthquake. The streets erupt with jagged cracks. Towers and bridges buckle and break, raining rubble dozens of stories down onto the cobblestones below. Levees perish, sending floodwaters in from the Hilt to wash over low-lying districts. Lightning rails are thrown from their *conductor stones*. Craggy chasms swallow bustling marketplaces.

Within hours, industry halts. Sharn leaders attempt desperate speeches while the City Watch deputizes any and all brave adventurers they can find to help coordinate rescue efforts. Many volunteers are swept into improvised meeting halls to hear relief plans and receive emergency healing and care equipment. The PCs, though, are contacted by a special representative of the Breland crown. They are tasked with exploring the Sharn sewers, where it is believed the epicenter, and the answers of the quake's origin, may lie. Is it possible the quake could be of unnatural origin? What enormous forces would it take to cause such destruction under the City of Towers? What sociopolitical ripples could result from this level of dysfunction in Khorvaire's largest metro center? What aftershocks of political upheaval, crime, and magic will follow this titanic quake?

Tools of the Daelkyr

Two young dragons of the Chamber, Shalash and Ofarrn, have watched mortal events since the early days of Galifar, but they can stand to merely watch no longer. Events have conspired to bring three seemingly unrelated artifacts -- a Riedran tome of summoning rituals, an ancient orcish wand that hums with abjuration magic, and a timeless orb from Xen'drik in the Age of Giants -- together in Khorvaire. Shalash and Ofarrn know from their research that these three artifacts share a common ancestry: a taint of evil linked to the plane of Xoriat, home of the unspeakable daelkyr.

Shalash believes it's time to interfere overtly with the mortals: She wants to sweep in, steal the artifacts, and destroy them before some agent learns ways to use them to unearth a daelkyr general. But Ofarrn convinces her that the better course of action is to hire mortals to locate and procure them subtly, so that Khorvaire does not become panicked by the draconic intrusion. What organizations or individuals currently hold the artifacts? What steps will the dragons take to make sure the artifacts are located quickly, yet kept safely separate? What forces might have spies already aware of the potential that these three artifacts possess?

Mini-Hooks

- A graceful, silver-haired woman who speaks Common with Draconic inflections approaches the PCs, looking for help in locating a particular deposit of Eberron dragonshards.
- Druids at a timeworn, stone observatory in the Eldeen Reaches find evidence that an upcoming meteor shower may rain fire down on populated areas of eastern Khorvaire.
- A body-warping disease apparently communicable only to persons with dragonmarks spreads through Khorvaire's metropolitan centers.

- Cultists of the Blood of Vol discover the four families whose progeny, they believe, will result in the reincarnation of Vol, two generations from now -- and the family of one of the PCs is one of them.
- Bloodscale lizardfolk shamans activate ley lines connecting six overgrown jungle temples, which form the head, body, and limbs of a titanic golem.
- The Lord of Blades announces the completion of the capital city of his nation of warforged, and he promises to reveal his role in the destruction of Cyre in the upcoming celebratory proceedings.
- Researchers in Aundair require documents believed to be stored in the lost tomb of a pre-Galifar wizard in order to operate a time-traveling eldritch device.
- Jhazaal Dhakaan summons goblinoids from hundreds of miles in every direction into a massive army loyal to her talented voice.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Three-Dragon Ante

By Doug Beyer

Last month we saw the release of *Three-Dragon Ante*, which is both a real card game and the game-within-a-game of choice in taverns and gambling parlors across the **D&D** world. In honor of its release, today's Steal This Hook! takes Three-Dragon Ante as its theme and helps you weave the game into your **Eberron** campaign. Enjoy.

The Highest Stakes

It's not surprising that the party's rogue would owe debts to Vrogath the Lucky, infamous crimelord of the Sharn undercity. The grizzled, bespectacled orc helps many adventuring rogues get their start. But when it comes to debt, Vrogath doesn't forgive or forget. And now that the PC rogue has done well for herself, it's time for Vrogath to collect -- with interest.

It starts with some socioeconomic pressure -- local merchants won't take the PC's money or render service to her or her compatriots. It develops into more direct, physical pressure -- a rough encounter with Vrogath's thugs under a dripping Sharn skybridge. It ends with a meeting with Vrogath himself, and an offer. If the PC agrees to a game of "platinum ante" (Three-Dragon Ante played for platinum pieces) in the amount of the rogue's debt, she can walk away debt-free and rich besides. But Vrogath is notoriously "lucky" -- in that he cheats mercilessly -- and the game would be played on his turf. Can the PCs beat Vrogath at his own game? If "victory" would mean an enraged Sharn crimelord, is there any winning hand?

The Brass Assassin

It's not just rogues and criminals who enjoy a game of cards -- many a gambit is played in the marble halls of courtesans. But when a murder occurs over a game of platinum ante, no expense is spared to find the perpetrator.

The killer used contact poison on a Three-Dragon Ante deck -- in particular, it is believed, on a Brass Dragon card -- to murder a beloved advisor of Lord Barwith ir'Stramm, a noble in western Breland. Lord Barwith himself was in that game and feels he was the intended target of the poison; he hires the adventurers to serve as his personal investigators of the crime.

In a dramatic scene, the players pose as members of Lord Barwith's court to trick the killer into striking again. You, as the DM, may secretly choose one of the cards to be poisoned -- the 9-strength Brass Dragon, for example -- and watch to see whether a player draws it over several gambits. You could also have players roll a Fortitude save -- whether they're poisoned or not -- whenever any of the players draws a Brass Dragon card. Has the killer dared to strike again using the same methods? Might he or she have switched what card is poisoned, or

poisoned multiple cards? Can the heroes trace the source of the card tampering? What if Lord Barwith wasn't the target, and his advisor was key to some enemy plot?

Riches at the Roadhouse

Goradra Roadhouse, an adventurers' saloon whose foundation nearly teeters on the Goradra Gap in the Mror Holds (***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting,* page 193), is a breeding ground for the gambling debts of fortune-hunters. The Gap, the deepest and possibly the most chillingly mysterious chasm in all of Khorvaire, draws fortune-seekers from around the plane. Some never return from their optimistic spelunk, but a lucky few come back drunk on adventure and laden with treasure, looking for ale, a place to rest, and a game of platinum ante or ten.

The party members have many opportunities to use Three-Dragon Ante to gain information or seek adventure here. Do they butter up the drunken barbarian during a game to discover his route to a potential dragonshard hoard? Do they throw a game to a reticent ranger to gauge his effectiveness as a Gap guide? Do they stage a high-stakes game with a limb on the line to flush out a thieving Jhorash'tar orc miner? Do they simply challenge the best, richest player in the saloon to an all-or-nothing gambit to fund their expedition down into the chasm?

A Dragon's Gambit

The secret society of Argonnessen dragons known as the Chamber has disguised agents throughout Khorvaire. One such agent is Err'a'galash, a young bronze dragon posing as the noble Lady Helon of Aundair, who fraternizes freely both with Aundair royalty and with the half-elves of Stormhome. Her mission among humanoid society is to monitor political developments in Aundair and report to her associates in the Chamber any happenings of import to the draconic Prophecy. When Three-Dragon Ante becomes popular among House Lyrandar, however, her draconic pride is insulted; she hates seeing her glorious brethren cast into playing pieces in a mortal betting game. Her egotistical wrath reaches its peak when some suggest that her intellect may not be up to the task of beating Lyrandar's elite players -- and she begins a secret plan to become the most accomplished player in Aundair.

Will a bronze dragon stoop to hiring secret tutors in the play of this mere card game? Might she run back-door tournaments, inviting experts from other nations to help her train for defeating House Lyrandar? Does she suspect that the game actually has something to do with the revelation of Prophecy among Aundair humanoids? Does she favor dragonmarked players, or use some sort of magical trickery to gain the upper hand? Is she a rogue among the Chamber in her interest in the game, or is it a greater concern among dragonkind?

Mini-Hooks

Try these mini-hooks if you want a way to introduce the game into your campaign.

- After a PC wins a particularly topsy-turvy tavern game of copper ante using the Druid card, an impressed shifter invites the PCs to join a higher-stakes game in his hometown in the Eldeen Reaches.
- A skilled gnomish painter creates a Three-Dragon Ante deck using silver- and gold-laced paints, and the artist's patron hires the PCs to transport it; however, thieves pressure the party to play a gambit or two with the exquisite cards.
- An old acquaintance asks the changeling PC to substitute for him in tomorrow night's gold dragon match.
- The PCs notice a wanted poster for an illusionist who has cheated at cards in Karrnathi tournaments.
- The party meets traveling wilderness profiteers and strike up a rousing game of copper-ante over drinks and a campfire.
- Under pressure from the Church of the Silver Flame, Thrane lawmakers outlaw gambling within Thrane's borders, causing an influx of Three-Dragon Ante players into Aundair and Breland.
- The Library of Korranberg plays host to a private collection of historically important Three-Dragon Ante decks, and it stages a festival of games for all comers.
- The PCs stumble upon a field of ceremonial burial mounds of lizardfolk, where each mound is adorned by stone markers carved with sequential draconic patterns -- an archaic form of the game?

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Dungeoneering Dilemmas

By Doug Beyer

Cut off from sunlight, surrounded by uncaring granite, hunted by darkvision-possessing horrors -- nothing else makes an **Eberron** adventurer feel more alive. Today's edition of Steal This Hook! has a theme of *dungeoneering dilemmas* and presents several adventure hooks designed to get your dungeon-bound heroes making tough decisions, and fast. Enjoy.

In the Swing of Things

The PCs chase a hobgoblin thief through the depths of an unstable Darguun silver-mine shaft. During the chase, the thief triggers an explosion, then swings across an immeasurably deep underground chasm on a rope swing. As the heroes run toward the chasm and rope swing, the mine tunnel collapses behind them. They have to stop at the chasm's edge and swing one-by-one across the gulf -- but, with the number of party members equaling N, the collapsing tunnel will reach them in N-1 rounds. It'll take quick thinking to figure a way to get everyone safely across -- especially when the hobgoblin begins loading his crossbow with rope-cutting bolts . . .

A Gnomish Quandary

Wintertime has come early to Zilargo's Howling Peaks this year, but that doesn't prevent the heroes from descending into a glittering frozen cavern near the top of Mount Indiro. The two young House Sivis gnomes, Diomayr and Julba, aren't going to rescue themselves -- and the heroes agree with their House Sivis guide that all signs point to this icy cave as their destination. When the heroes find evidence that the missing gnomes seem to be captives of a resident frost giant, they may be none too happy. When the heroes find further evidence that the frost giant is actually working for the *gnomes*, they may wonder what the heck is going on. In addition, their guide sniffs the air and declares the tunnel to be the lair of a group of svirfneblin, who normally shun such chilly environs. The missing Sivis youths must be in cahoots with both the svirfneblin and the frost giant, and the expedition to locate them may be a trap. Do the heroes press on and learn the truth of this new mystery, or retreat and reassess? Or is it too late to back out, now that the frost giant's cavern is full of their scent?

Hazardous-Environment Robot

The venomous spiders of a cavern called Chittering Deeps have claimed the lives of many adventurers hoping to find its rumored treasure. The Deeps was once a jewel mine, long-since stripped of its gemstones but rumored to

be the home of a wealthy night hag who loots the bodies of the spiders' victims. The PCs find one particularly harsh chamber whose floor is covered in chittering arachnids. Hung on the wall at the near side of the chamber, in easy reach of the heroes, is a golden wand. At the other side of the chamber, set in the wall 20 feet up, is the exit -- barred with iron -- and, on a short pedestal, a motionless warforged wearing a golden collar.

Experimentation reveals that the wand controls the movements of the warforged, and that with a little practice, the PCs can force the warforged to march around the spider-infested chamber, fetch a ladder to the exit tunnel, unlock the iron grating, and lower a boardwalk for the PCs to walk across. However, while the warforged is moving around the chamber, the spiders bite him mercilessly and painfully. Will the PCs use the night hag's handy warforged slave to help them across the room? Or will they find some other way to brave the chamber, and perhaps release the warforged from its painful servitude?

The Pit and the Psion

In the village overlooking Breland's horrible Black Pit (***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting,* page 150), a halfling by the name of Crenshi is reading minds. Crenshi's purpose is to find travelers who are wealthy enough to fund his expedition down into that shadowy pit, fit enough to help him fight the dangers found there, and foolhardy -- or suggestible -- enough to allow him to perform a ceremony to his god, Khyber, the Dragon Below. Since he sees the heroes as just the candidates he requires, the psion Crenshi, along with his brutish hired-hand Olak, encourage the PCs to join resources with him so that they can rent an airship, fly it into the Black Pit's depths, and retrieve a miraculous lost artifact. Crenshi promises mountains of gold from the sale of this artifact to a buyer he has already lined up, and he just needs the PCs to agree to the split . . .

Mini-Hooks

Try these mini-hooks to get your players sitting on the edge of their seats.

- While the PCs hunt dragonshard smugglers in the caverns of the Shadow Marches, a worried father hires them to find his missing daughter -- but the daughter is one of the smugglers.
- An ogre mage takes residence in the sewers under Sharn and starts befriending all sorts of criminal characters -- is she more of a threat to Sharn's citizens, or to the crime-bosses of the Sharn underworld?
- A journalist from the *Korranberg Chronicle* wants an exclusive "ride-along" with the heroic adventurers as they brave an undead-infested dungeon.
- A xorn swallows a precious dragonshard in its muddy chasm lair -- do the PCs attack the xorn and risk damaging the dragonshard?
- The PCs dive to the undersea caves near the Lhazaar Principalities using magic *water breathing* paraphernalia -- but the rare artifact they discover emits a disruptive *antimagic field*.
- A principled young Valenar elf swears that an Undying councilor told him to find his destiny in the caves under a Q'barra ruin -- and he needs the heroes to help him.
- The money's good, but will the adventurers accept the offer to explore the dungeon that is haunted by living *stinking cloud* spells?

Steal This Hook!

Old Mysteries

By Robert Wiese

Welcome to the new Steal This Hook! I am very glad to add my contributions to this column. One of my favorite **D&D** products ever produced was the *Dungeon Master Design Kit*, a veritable cornucopia of general ideas for rolling up adventure ideas randomly. So, adventure ideas are close to my heart, and I am glad to help DMs out there. I wish this resource was available back in the day when I ran home campaigns.

The column has been revamped and expanded a little. The revamping comes in the formats of the hooks. As you'll see, there are optional secret motivations suggested for the NPCs and different complications that you can throw into the adventure you design around the hook. (Remember to allow for appropriate checks; sometimes a person with bad intentions may give herself away!) It has been expanded into other campaign worlds as well, especially the **Forgotten Realms.** Each entry has a campaign adaptation sidebar for the **Forgotten Realms**, **Eberron**, a generic **D&D** setting, and even the **d20 Modern** setting. So, off we go. This month's theme is "old mysteries," or things from the past that thrust their way into the present.

Lady of the Lake -- *Eberron*

The Last War produced many casualties, not a few of them innocents. When Breland made its military push across Silver Lake and into what was then Aundair (now the Eldeen Reaches), a large number of farms were burned and small towns and villages destroyed. A few of these towns fended off the destructive Brelish by offering supplies, haven, or even the "services" of local women and men. In one of the villages near Greenblade, a local woman named Bristarra disappeared without a trace in early 955 YK. Bristarra was a beautiful girl training in the healing arts, and her whole village loved her. At the time, people blamed the Brelish and mourned her loss, but the outrage contributed even more to the growing desire to evict the Brelish military from the region.

Now, troubling reports are circulating that people have seen Bristarra walking on the surface of Silver Lake. Ship captains have reported that either themselves or their crewpeople have seen a woman strolling serenely on the lake's water. Fisherpeople have reported seeing the same woman in the early dawn hours dancing on the waters. At night, she has been seen from the shore on the Eldeen Reaches side of the lake. She is growing into something of a local legend, though no one has ever gotten close enough to determine if she is a real woman, a spirit, or an elaborate illusion. Her father, Crennilius, is close to death and wants to know. He hires the adventurers to find this apparition and learn the truth about what happened to his daughter. Time is running out, though, because he could die any day now.

d100 Motivations

01-50 All is as it seems. Crennilius really wants to know what happened to his daughter.

51-80 Crennilius knows what happened to his daughter. He sold her to a Brelish captain, who discarded her when he was finished with her. Crennilius wants to know if this is really his daughter, because he doesn't want anyone to find out about his dark deed.

81-00 Crennilius is afraid that his daughter has returned as an undead of some kind, something that she would never have wanted. He wants the adventurers to destroy her, but cannot bring himself to ask.

d100 Complications

01-30 Bristarra is a ghost caught between her good nature and a desire for revenge for how she died. The conflict within her explains why she has not attacked anyone yet. But soon she will.

31-55 A great monster lives under the surface of the lake. It lurks near the apparition hoping for some prey from among those who come to investigate.

56-75 Someone is using this local tragedy in a political ploy to stir up unrest between the inhabitants on each side of Silver Lake. He wants a war to break out here that will end the Thronehold peace.

76-00 Pirates are using the image of this girl as a mermaid of sorts, to lure ships to where they can be attacked. It should be noted that only ships that have not approached the apparition have been able to tell stories about it.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. To make things more interesting on the waters of the lake, you might consider using material from *Stormwrack*; for particularly difficult encounters, you might consider stocking the lake with drowned (*Monster Manual III*, pg. 46) -- considered by many a DM as very deadly undead.

Forgotten Realms: Set it on the shores of the Sea of Fallen Stars, and change the Brelish military to pirates.

Eberron: Set it in and around Silver Lake, as written.

Generic: Use any lake large enough to have opposing military forces on both sides.

d20 Modern: Set this adventure on a lake in Scotland or Ireland, and use the British as the opposing military force.

Gold in the Hills -- *Forgotten Realms*

The ancient dwarven kingdom of Tethyamar once spanned the Desertsmouth Mountains on the western edge of Daggerdale. Several hundred years ago it fell to armies of monsters. About the same time that these armies began to threaten the dwarves, the king abandoned a few of the lesser mines on the Daggerdale side of the mountains because they were deemed to be completely worked out. Several persistent dwarves tried to get a little more, but even they gave up eventually. Through the next few hundred years, prospectors and adventurers that braved the monsters found that indeed these mines were empty of anything of value, and it became settled fact that the mines were worthless.

Within the last year, gold has started trickling out of one of the mines. The amounts have been steadily growing, as if the supply is actually replenishing itself. People are interested in what is happening in the old mine, and any of several people could hire adventurers to find out.

d100 Employers and Motivations

01-25 Though the last king of Tethyamar died in 1369 DR, he had sons. One of these, Tasster, also called Fiendshredder, would like to claim the gold and use it to finance an effort to reclaim Tethyamar.

25-50 Residents of Daggerdale are very interested in this new source of wealth, and want their share. Some of them hire the adventurers to stake a claim on their behalf and clear the way to the mine of dangerous monsters.

51-75 A scholar from Waterdeep has heard about the gold coming out of the abandoned mine, and he has come to the region to investigate. He wants protection and some help with the mystery, and he is willing to share whatever is found as a result of the quest.

76-00 Most people who go to the mine do not return for one reason or another. One of the adventurers has a relative that has gone missing while searching for, or in, the mine.

d100 Complications

01-25 A mindbender wizard (*Complete Arcane*) is using magic to fill the mine with gold because gold attracts other creatures. He wants to enslave these creatures, who will be mentally weakened by greed, and create an army to march against Daggerdale.

26-65 Through a connection to the Underdark, some duergar have discovered the gold as well, and want it for themselves.

66-85 The gold is the work of Bane, or priests of Bane from the Zhentarim, who seek to destabilize the Dalelands with a sudden influx of wealth. The resultant chaos would allow the Zhentarim to take over trade or take over the region.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. To flesh out the dwarven angle, you might find *Races of Stone* useful.

Forgotten Realms: Set it in the Desertsmouth Mountains, as written.

Eberron: Set it in the Ironroot Mountains, in the Mror Holds. You'll have to tweak the backstory a bit.

Generic: Set it in any mountain range that could once have had a mine. The miners need not have been dwarves.

d20 Modern: Set it in the Ural Mountains in Russia. Whether you want dwarves in Russia is up to you.

86-00 The gold is natural and comes from a vein that a minor earthquake opened up. However, a mind flayer now occupies the mine and does not like all the company. He has been leaking out the gold through slaves, unaware of the history of the mine.

Necropolis in the Sands -- *Forgotten Realms*

As the player characters are crossing the Calim Desert from Memnon to Calimport, they come across a family searching frantically for a lost child. The family's wagon broke a wheel here this morning, and the three adults (a man, his wife, and her brother) cannibalized some other wood to make repairs while the

three children played nearby. The youngest child, eight-year-old Justinal, separated from the other two children and wandered off unnoticed. Everyone has been searching frantically for over an hour without success. The family asks the player characters to assist in the search. From the last location that Justinal was seen, any tracker that can make a DC 15 Survival check can find and follow Justinal's tracks. The difficulty is higher because a wind has erased some of the tracks in the hours since Justinal wandered off. His trail leads to a large and apparently deserted city about two hours' walk away. As the heroes reach the city gates themselves, darkness begins to fall.

The Calim Desert is rumored to have several ruined cities within its sands, and this is one of them. The residents were all killed during the genie wars of centuries ago, and they have since become undead of different kinds. A lich has moved in and taken control of things. In short, the city is a necropolis, and many undead await within to feast on the bodies and souls of any intruders.

The family has no wealth to offer the heroes; they are poor travelers escaping persecution in Calimport.

d100 Motivation

01-25 The family is setting a trap to lure the living into the necropolis so that undead can feed. Justinal is a zombie ordered to walk back toward the city to create a trail that can be followed. One of the adults is currently being possessed by a servant of the lich.

26-75 Everything is as it appears. The parents are careless and expected one of the other children to keep track of the younger ones.

76-00 There is no Justinal. The parents want brave heroes to go into the necropolis and bring out its treasures. The parents then plan to waylay the weakened player characters and take the loot. The other children are slaves of the parents and obey out of fear.

d100 Complications

01-30 No complications.

31-55 A lich has cast a spell on Justinal and called him to come to the city. The lich plans to make Justinal his apprentice and train him in the ways of evil from an early age.

56-75 Justinal is actually a child of an important noble in Calimport, and he was kidnapped by this group. If he is returned safely, then the player characters may gain great reward or may be accused of kidnapping him in the first place.

76-00 A rival lich or vampire sees in Justinal a chance to usurp the power of the lich. The player characters are caught in the middle as both sides try to use the child to their advantage and to the other's ruin.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. To develop (dare I say "flesh out?") the lich or other undead, and the necropolis itself, you might consider *Libris Mortis* or *Heroes of Horror* as useful sources. *Sandstorm* has good material for bringing the desert setting to life.

Forgotten Realms: Set it in the Calim Desert, as written

Eberron: Set it in the Blade Desert in Valenar's territory, close to the border with the Mournland.

Generic: Use a desert setting where a city could have been lost in the sands. It should be several days' travel from any major city.

d20 Modern: This adventure is suitable for a location in southern Egypt or the northern Sudan.

Steal This Hook!

Monsters in the Wilderness

By Robert Wiese

You step on a branch and the cracking sound, though not very loud, alerts a fierce creature ahead of you, spoiling your chance to ambush it. A majestic and powerful monster denies you passage through the hills unless you parlay with it, or bribe it. As you walk through the woods, you come across a pile of bodies, and, while you investigate, creatures spring forth to add your remains to their collection. The wilderness is a natural home for monsters (thankfully), and it can be very dangerous to get from point A to point B in a fantasy world. This month's collection of hooks takes you deep into the wilderness to confront powerful (or numerous) monsters.

You Will Not Pass -- *Forgotten Realms*

For many years in both Impiltur and the Vast, there have been rumors of a hidden pass through the Earthspur Mountains. Many think that this pass connects the River Vesper in the Vast with the city of Laviguer in Impiltur. Merchant lords would pay dearly for the knowledge of such a pass.

In Tantras, the adventurers meet a bard named Furellis Creed who tells stories of traveling this hidden pass. He is scorned by most, but one who hears the bard's tale is very interested. A merchant lord named Fennelac Brightmore spends much time talking to this bard, and then he hires the adventurers to travel the path that he has worked out from the bard's meandering tales. He believes that the pass is real. With sole control of it, he could monopolize trade along that path and become very rich.

The pass is real. The reason that it has escaped detection all these years is that it is the home of a lonely and heartbroken criosphinx. Long ago, this sphinx found and wooed a gynosphinx, but she spurned him in favor of an androsphinx. The sphinx became despondent and fled to the lonely mountain area. Since coming, he has chosen an unusual path (for a criosphinx) and learned arcane power from the texts of those he has killed. The criosphinx challenges all those who pass, and so far no one has met his test or bested the creature. The sphinx uses its magic to make those it defeats forget the encounter or the location of the pass.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Fennelac Brightmore is being aboveboard with the adventurers. He really wants to know if the pass exists so he can map and control it, and he is willing to cut the adventurers in on the action if they can secure the pass for him.

51-80 Fennelac works for the criosphinx and sends people into the

mountains whenever the criosphinx wants him to do so.

81-00 Fennelac knows about the criosphinx, and he needs the adventurers to kill it to break a family curse. He cannot ask them directly, however; he must trick them into doing the deed or the curse cannot be broken.

d100 Complications

01-30 The criosphinx has cowed a number of ice trolls, frost giants, or ettins into serving him. They are the reason that no one has ever mapped this pass; they kill any who try to enter the pass and cook the bodies for the criosphinx.

31-50 The gynosphinx that spurned the criosphinx is in the area too. After years of bad treatment at the hands of the androsphinx, she has come to realize her mistake and is now seeking her former suitor. However, he has become very bitter.

51-80 Fennelac insists on sending along the bard Furellis Creed, who is a nuisance and insists on teaching the sphinx the proper way to challenge travelers with riddles.

81-00 The sphinx is really a dracolich in disguise.

Campaign Adaptation

This adventure can go into any campaign world. Here are some suggestions.

Forgotten Realms: Set it in the Earthspur Mountains, as written.

Eberron: This adventure can be set in the mountains between Zilargo and Darguun. You might replace the criosphinx with an evil hieracosphinx.

Generic: Place the adventure somewhere with a seldom-used or unused high mountain pass.

d20 Modern: Finding a sphinx in the modern day may be quite a surprising challenge for the PCs, but you could place this adventure in the mountain range in Algeria that is near Niger, and alter the backstory to give another reason why someone would want to find the pass.

Ant Food -- *Eberron*

In northern Breland, a halfling caravan stops in Hatheril to replenish supplies for its journey north into Thrane. The people of the caravan are relocating to join relatives in Thrane, and their caravan wagons contain all their earthly possessions. They set off without incident. Several days later, three halflings stagger into Hatheril tired and looking for help. They tell the adventurers that their caravan is waiting for them to bring help to fight the ant monsters that have been picking off the halflings and their horses.

The caravan was traveling through southern Thrane, near the Harrowcrowns, when two large insects with six legs and chitinous hides erupted from the ground, snatched two halflings, and disappeared back into the earth. The same thing happened a couple miles farther north. This time, a horse and a halfling were taken. The caravan stopped to take a defensive position, and these three were sent back to find help.

The creatures attacking the caravan are ankhegs that have moved into the plains area around the Harrowcrowns. There are well over one hundred of the creatures spread around, all hunting whatever comes by. The halfling caravan will not attempt to move from the area until they have competent help in the form of adventurers who can fight the ankhegs and protect the halflings.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Yep. There are ankhegs out there eating halflings.

51-80 One of the halflings is trying to kill off his relatives, and he knew about the ankheg infestation in advance. He persuaded the others to use the route through the monsters, and he always rides on a wagon or drives one to avoid being attacked.

81-00 There are ankhegs, but they have not attacked the halflings. Another group of halflings ambused the caravan and killed everyone. The three coming into town are trying to lure rich adventurers out to the remote wilderness to be killed by the evil halflings (who are using the caravan). The real ankhegs are a little farther north, but they could appear before the adventurers deal with the halflings.

d100 Complications

01-40 The ankhegs are exhibiting unusual coordination of effort. A spider demon or a xill that is trying to depopulate part of the countryside leads them. The halfling caravan is just one victim of many.

41-75 Another larger monster is in the area hunting ankhegs, and it won't discriminate when it comes to adventurer, halfling, or even ankheg for dinner.

76-00 The ankhegs are actually trained creatures in a special test unit of the Thrane army out on maneuvers, and Thrane won't be happy that they are being butchered.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. You can find out all about halflings in *Races of the Wild*, and this book should help you make appropriate NPCs or villains.

Forgotten Realms: Set this adventure anywhere in the Shaar where there is a close enough town, or in the Greenfields.

Eberron: Set it in southern Thrane, as written.

Generic: This adventure should be set in a plains wilderness area bordering on a forest. The key is wilderness -- some place without a lot of traffic. However, there should be a town within a few days' travel.

d20 Modern: A stretch of farmland in the midwestern United States makes a fine setting for this arcana adventure. Ankhegs among all those farms . . .

Field of Dreams -- *Forgotten Realms*

"There's wealth there, if only the monsters would go away," mused Lord DeMokka of Damara. "I want you to go into Vaasa and clear this tract of land for me," he tells you. The area he is pointing to is along the Galena Mountains on the Vaasa side, north of Bloodstone Pass. The land is about twenty miles wide and thirty miles long. "Once you rid this area of goblinkind and other monsters, I'll bring in people to mine and build a fort and settlement, and this cold land will finally begin to know civilization. It's a grand undertaking, and only one such as I could pull it off. With your help, of course. Does this interest you?"

The land of Vaasa has always been a cold and desolate place, and recently it was the home base of Zhengyi the Witch-King and his horde of monsters. Zhengyi was defeated a few years ago, but many of the monsters remain. The powerful people of Damara have always eyed the resources and lands of neighboring Vaasa, but they have been unable to create a permanent presence. Lord DeMokka hopes to be the first to do so.

DeMokka has the blessing of King Dragonbane in his efforts, and the promise of workers and troops should he prove successful. To do so, he must clear the tract of land of humanoid raiders, white dragons, remorhazes, and other frostfell monsters. This is a chance for the adventurers to go hunt some monsters and collect enough loot to become quite rich in their own rights -- if they survive.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Lord DeMokka wants the land cleared. He is not hiding anything.

51-80 DeMokka knows of an old white dragon in the Galena Mountains that has a specific artifact in its horde, and he wants the artifact in addition to wanting the land cleared. He hires a band of humanoid raiders to follow the adventurers and steal that one artifact from them if they claim it.

81-00 Lord DeMokka has a black heart and sees himself as the next Witch-King of Vaasa. He has an army of monstrous creatures in wait, and once the adventurers clear the area, he has indicated he will move against them, destroy them, fortify the area, and use it as his capitol to unify the rest of Vaasa.

d100 Complications

01-55 There are a lot of possible monster complications, since just about anything that makes its home in the frozen north, the mountains, or the arctic plains could be living in the area. All the creatures are wary of the great snow worms, though. Snow worms are bigger versions of purple worms that have adapted to the cold.

56-80 The area that Lord DeMokka is claiming is already claimed by a frost giant jarl who would like to open trade relations with Damara.

81-00 A lot of the monsters in the area come from a *portal* created by Zhengyi the Witch-King. The adventurers have to close the *portal* in addition to cleaning out the existing monsters.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Frostburn* ill really be useful in picking monsters, outfitting them with feats to baffle and outmaneuver the adventurers, and cover the dangers of cold and snow. You might also find *Draconomicon* useful, and *Savage Species* is a great source for monster feats.

Forgotten Realms: Set it in Vaasa, as written.

Eberron: Set this adventure in the northernmost parts of the Lhazaar Principalities, or on the barren Frostfell continent. Some adaptation of the back story might be necessary for this latter setting.

Generic: Though this is written for a cold climate, the adventure can be placed in any frontier area of the campaign where monsters infest areas that humans (or others) want to claim as their own.

d20 Modern: The GM of a modern world setting may not have her world contain areas of wilderness infested by monsters, at least not like a **D&D** world does. However, a d20 Past game would have such areas (and possibly monsters as well), and certainly space-based d20 Future games would have alien planets with frontiers (or whole planets that are frontiers). Your selection of monsters would be different than the cold-based ones suggested in the description.

Steal This Hook!

Gold, Silver, and Copper

By Robert Wiese

A glint of gold, silver, or brass flashes in the sky far away. An air of condescension and tolerance crosses the creature's expression as it looks down upon your small form. Fear and reverence and avarice flare across its features all at the same time. This month is all about dragons, and metallic ones at that. Even though they're always good (everywhere except Eberron, of course), they can still play really interesting roles in adventures other than "ally of the heroes" or "source of information for the heroes" or even "one who looks down on the heroes and makes them feel small."

Parts Is Parts -- *Eberron*

The town of New Cyre in eastern Breland is the new home of the refugees of the ruined nation of Cyre. The town began as a refugee camp and is now quite large. To this place comes a group of five half-orc merchants, laden with wares to sell. This is not at all unusual, and, except for the wares, the half-orcs don't attract any suspicious notice -- at least not at first.

The leader of the group, Halk-Astan (half-orc bard/scout), works the group's stall in the market. He tells a fantastic story that introduces buyers to his wares: parts from a gold dragon. "That's right," he says. "A gold dragon. We don't even see gold dragons on Khorvaire normally, but my troop and I were incredibly lucky. We were in the Seawall Mountains, prospecting for whatever minerals we could find, and also looking to slay some goblinoids. On our third day, we saw a huge shape fly overhead, and we were so surprised to see a golden dragon flying above us. Now, I don't know what it was doing there, but about an hour later we saw a silver dragon just as big flying off in the same direction. Then we heard the fighting. The two dragons were going at each other with all they had, let me tell you. Finally, the silver one slew the gold one and it plummeted to the ground -- well over 200 feet I'd say. We couldn't pass up this good fortune, since we figured that parts from a gold dragon are worth a lot to spellcasters. So we harvested what we could, and now we offer them to you at very reasonable prices."

The problem, of course, is that the parts are not from a gold dragon at all. They are from wyverns that the half-orcs slew in the mountains. Suspicion begins to mount a day or two after the half-orcs leave town, since the parts don't work in magic potions and spells as their users had hoped. Several wizards who feel cheated of the large sums they paid want the adventurers to track down the orcs, find out what really happened, and get their money back. Of course, if any real gold dragons are involved, the wizards would take real parts instead of their money.

d100 Motivations

01-40 The wizards are sincere in their desires, especially the part about replacement gold dragon parts.

41-75 The half-orcs told the truth (sort of); they really are gold dragon parts. The wizards think these erstwhile merchants have more and want the adventurers to trace the half-orcs down so the wizards can swoop in and steal the rest.

76-00 Halk-Astan is really a gold dragon in disguise, and he wants the heroes to go clean out the Seven Caves of wyverns so he can study the Prophecy. He hopes that using the wyvern parts will lead suspicious folk to the wyvern-infested caves, and he makes sure to plant some rumors that the half-orcs were heading that way.

d100 Complications

01-45 Wyverns live and breed in the Seven Caves, and the adventurers could have a lot of difficulty with them.

46-70 The Seven Caves is supposed to contain a part of the draconic Prophecy. Dragonmarks swirl across their surfaces, and few have ever tried to study them. A gold dragon is there now, in the fifth cave, trying to piece together a part of the Prophecy that came to him in a dream. He is not evil, but he is not good, either, and will object to having parts taken.

71-00 Goblinoids from Darguun are in the same area, and they don't take kindly to the adventurers learning about their activities in the area.

Campaign Adaptation

This hook can be adapted for different campaign worlds. If you want to read more to help you prepare, *Draconomicon* should help you with any dragons that you introduce into the adventure, and *Races of Destiny* can help with the half-orcs.

Forgotten Realms: This adventure would work well in the Earthfast Mountains and the Vast, in the Graypeak Mountains and Loudwater, or Orsraun Mountains and Turmish.

Eberron: Set it in the Seawall Mountains, as written.

Generic: The main requirement for this adventure is that you have some mountains where a dragon might live. Creating a wondrous cave complex that would attract dragons is not necessary; you could just have some dragon lairs in the vicinity.

d20 Modern: No real dragons are involved, and the parts come from some other known monster whose parts are valuable. Set in Siberia or Alaska.

Put That Back! -- *Forgotten Realms*

Dragons can be found anywhere in Faerûn, or so it seems. The people of the land are used to them living in far-away mountains and only occasionally appearing (at least in dragon form) in civilized lands. So the residents of a small town just south of the Serpent Hills are surprised when a copper dragon lands in the middle town and demands that the townspeople rebuild its hoard. It claims that human adventurers stole its hoard while it was away, and that the humans owe restitution. It grabs a random townsperson and flies off, promising to come back and take his recompense out of the lives of the townspeople if they don't comply.

The people of the town don't feel that they should pay this steep price for something they didn't even do, so they look for some heroes to solve their problem by tracking down this dragon and dealing with it. Some wonder why a good dragon would behave this way, but in light of imminent destruction, they are not that concerned about the oddness of it.

Killing a dragon that has no treasure is not a very rewarding task, so the townspeople point out that a lot of other dragons lair in the Serpent Hills, and if player characters could kill one of the evil ones they would be quite wealthy. The townspeople might even offer a map of reputed dragon dens, which local rangers keep just in case the knowledge could be useful someday (though knowing where NOT to go can certainly come in handy, too). These hoards could contain Netherese magic, among other things, because some of the dragons in the Serpent Hills are very old.

d100 Motivations

01-40 The town is really in trouble, but not from the copper dragon that landed there. The copper dragon is actually a red dragon that is using this stratagem to add to its own hoard, and it hopes that the townspeople won't try to kill a good creature but will try to negotiate.

41-80 The copper dragon has been rendered insane by one of the magic items in its hoard. It is really good, but must be cured of its insanity and the item removed from the hoard for everything to end happily.

81-00 One of the townspeople offers the heroes a pretty penny for any copper dragon parts they can acquire, since those are difficult to come by. Further, he offers to help them make armor from any scales they bring back.

d100 Complications

01-50 Red dragons in the Serpent Hills are entertained by the story of the renegade copper, but they are not entertained by the presence of heroes who like to steal dragons' hoards.

51-70 The copper dragon is an illusion created by a wizard that plans to steal the tribute once it is collected.

71-00 The adventurers run afoul of yuan-ti while on their quest. The yuan-ti offer to help the adventurers (any dead dragons are a benefit to them), but later double-cross the heroes.

Campaign Adaptation

If you need some suggestions for different campaign worlds, you'll find them below. Additionally, *Draconomicon* should help you with the dragons. If the evil wizard is present, you'll want *Complete Arcane* and maybe *Spell Compendium* to really make him a challenge for your player characters. Yuan-ti are covered in several books, including *Savage Species*.

Forgotten Realms: Set it in the Serpent Hills, as written.

Eberron: The presence of a copper dragon would be very unusual on Khorvaire, so set this adventure on Aerenal where the elves are in a constant war (of sorts) with the dragons of Argonnessen.

Generic: Mountains and a town nearby are all you need. It would help if dragons really did live in the mountains, but the adventure takes on a new level of mystery if it is not widely known that dragons live in the mountains.

d20 Modern: This adventure would probably work best on another planet (*d20 Future*), where dragons could be more populous. Alternatively, you could make this whole thing a yuan-ti experiment or deception and place it in some remote location in South America, using dinosaurs or giant snakes or something like that.

Heart of Silver -- *Forgotten Realms*

Before the modern races stepped onto the Faerûnian stage, the great wyrms ruled the land and acted with impunity, since they were unchallenged by any other

creator race. Eventually, the lesser races mastered magic and became threats to the dragons. And thus the world began to change. In the last years of this time, the greatest human wizards tried to gain control of the oldest and most powerful silver dragon in existence, Kinenthurnurnverasal. The dragon proved too powerful for them, but they put it into stasis nonetheless. They cut out its heart and made of the heart a powerful amulet that contained the dragon's life force. Then they broke the heart into three pieces. Eventually the pieces went to different owners. In the present day, two are held by two rogues in Waterdeep (read the Rogues and Ruffians section in *City of Splendors: Waterdeep* for a few ideas on specific beings you may want to choose), and the third is lost to history.

The body of Kinenthurnurnverasal remains in stasis in a cave deep beneath the Orsraun Mountains, where no one has found it in generations. Legends from that ancient time say that if the heart of Kinenthurnurnverasal can be remade and restored to his preserved body, the dragon will be reborn and that the one who does this can command service from the ancient and powerful dragon as one would do with a genie.

Should this tale reach the ears of the rogues, their initial tendency is to never cooperate with any plan to restore the dragon to life because each would be afraid that the other would gain the benefit.

The adventure begins for the heroes when they find the lost piece in a hoard of treasure held by the Zhentarim, who know the item is magic but have no idea what it does. The heroes find out (perhaps via a sage or other luminary that the PCs visit regularly), and they then have to collect the two pieces from the rival rogues. Their sponsor, should they need one, is the sage who informs them what the heart piece really is.

Since the heroes start this adventure of their own volition, the usual Motivations section doesn't apply.

d100 Complications

01-25 One or both of the rival rogues offers to help in the quest, but provides a false heart piece and then follows the heroes to the body to claim the rewards for himself or herself.

26-45 The legend is only partly true. The ancient dragon has become evil because of what happened to it, and the heroes have to stop it from unleashing its ancient might on the world.

46-70 The whole legend is false. There is an artifact that is in three pieces, but it is not the heart of an ancient dragon. The sage who tells them this knows what it really is and plans to acquire it from the heroes once they have the whole artifact.

Campaign Adaptation

If you want to use this in different campaign worlds, take a look at the suggestions that follow. Also, *City of Splendors: Waterdeep* should be invaluable for the first part of the adventure, including selecting or creating the rogues involved. The Orsraun Mountains are full of monsters, so just about any book (including the upcoming *Monster Manual IV*) will have you cackling with glee as you select encounters with which to plague your adventurers and make their approach to the ancient body as difficult as it should be.

Forgotten Realms: Use it as written.

Eberron: In Eberron, the dragons ruled the ancient world, too, and now have retreated to Argonnessen. The heroes could find the lost piece on Khorvaire, then collect the two other pieces from rival thieves' guildmasters in Sharn, before undertaking the really dangerous journey into Argonnessen to fulfill this ancient story.

Generic: A large city with rival guildmasters serves as the starting point, and you can put the ancient dragon's body anywhere.

d20 Modern: This adventure requires significant modification to work well on Modern Earth. Perhaps the dragon was a powerful antediluvian creature, and the

71-90 A modern-day dragon believes that should it place the heart within itself, that it will acquire the power of the ancient dragon through its trapped life force and become invincible. This dragon plagues the heroes every step of their quest.

wizards who put it into stasis were aliens of some kind.

91-00 The heart pieces have a curse on them that inflicts anyone who steals them from their current owner with a wasting disease that requires an epic spellcaster to cure.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

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Steal This Hook!

Demon Princes Among Us

By Robert Wiese

Red and black skin, wings and sharp teeth. Heated breath and flames emanating from the creature before you. That's the idealized description of a demon from the pits of the Abyss, and what this month's set of adventure ideas is all about: Demons. Of course, they don't all look like that. Some are made of weird tentacles and fungus parts, some are oozy, some are stunningly beautiful. But they all mean harm to mortals for one reason or another. Even evil mortals should beware dealing with them, for unlike devils they have no conception of keeping their word. This month, we look at a trio of very different adventure ideas in which demon lords play important roles.

Where Are My Musicians? -- *Forgotten Realms*

Some matters are settled with combat while others can be settled in more peaceful ways... such is the case in a dispute between halflings and grigs about which is the better fiddler. Though the halfling homeland is south in Luiren, there are halflings living all across Faerûn. A troupe of halfling bards settled in Essembra, the most populous city in Battledale, where they quickly gained a reputation for their music, especially their playing of fiddles. The local grigs became jealous, or bored (it's hard to say which with a grig), and challenged the halfling troupe to a contest to determine the best fiddlers of the dale. The grigs and halflings would meet in the central square of Essembra and play for the people, and the people would choose.

However, with everyone waiting and the grigs getting restless, the halflings have failed to show up. The grigs claim that they knew they would be beaten, but there are others in town who know that the Halflings would never choose to miss a musical contest. The bards' biggest fan, retired Purple Dragon Knight Kisthin Amadals, asks the heroes to find out what happened to the halflings. He had booked them to play at a party at his mansion the following evening, and hopes the heroes can find them in time.

So what did happen to them? Fame could be said to be the root of their current predicament. The ancient city of Myth Drannor is somewhat close to Essembra, a city rife with drow and demons and what have you. Recently, an aspect of Graz'zt was sent to work with the surface drow as a sign of a an apparent (if temporary) alliance with Lolth. In truth, Graz'zt seeks to turn the drow to his own service, or at least make good use of them. The aspect found conditions intolerable, and set about making himself comfortable in his new home. Comfort -- for an aspect of Graz'zt -- includes every kind of decadence, with music naturally being one excess that must be plumbed to its depths. The aspect heard about the halfling bards, and had them abducted just before the competition. They are now trapped somewhere close to Myth Drannor, forced to do things with music that it is

best not to talk about.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Kisthin Amadals really is concerned, though he expects he has to find another group for his party. However, he feels some obligation to have the bards tracked down, in case they are in trouble.

51-70 Kisthin Amadals is not a Purple Dragon Knight at all, but a slaver working for Thayans. He had planned to sell the bards into slavery, and used the party as an excuse to get them to his mansion so that they could be caught.

71-00 The grigs, who are being blamed by a large number of townsfolk ("You can't trust them damned faeries!"), also seek out the heroes for help, to clear their names and possibly avoid sudden vigilante-style justice.

d100 Complications

01-30 Myth Drannor offers its own complications, ranging from drow to demons to other nasty monsters. The adventures should have great difficulty operating within a few miles of the place. Maps of the great dungeon might be available to help them, and they could use the maps later for additional adventures.

31-50 Aspects of Graz'zt are as seductive as succubi, and would try to ensnare the heroes in a web of sensuality that diverts them from their real intentions.

51-75 Drow unhappy with the presence of the aspect of Graz'zt might be willing to help the adventurers... for a price.

76-00 A fearsome half-fiend green dragon has also made its home in the area, and likes to snack on halflings. Indeed, one of the bards was already lost to it. Dragon parts are always valuable, even if halflings are not.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. You'll want to get a copy of *Fiendish Codex I* to flesh out the demons you'll use, especially since it includes the statistics for Graz'zt. Any of the Myth Drannor publications should help too, as well as *Races of the Wild* for the elves that live in the vicinity.

Forgotten Realms: Set around Myth Drannor, as written.

Eberron: Set this adventure in the Eldeen Reaches. The Twilight Demesne would serve as home for the grigs, and the Gloaming could be where the aspect of Graz'zt is based.

Generic: You can really set this adventure anywhere there might be grigs living in your campaign world.

d20 Modern: There are probably only grigs in England, Wales, Ireland, or Scotland, if there are any at all. But you could make the sides into two opposing rock bands and have the adventure in Australia or the United States. The aspects convert easily to Modern Earth.

Gnomelantis -- *Eberron*

Long before the Kingdom of Galifar arose on Khorvaire, the other kingdoms of the continent had grown and faded. The gnomes of Zilargo had, in the past, advanced their borders northward into what is now Breland by establishing a city called Yerosin on an island in the middle of Lake Brey. There, the Zil could better watch what other nations were doing, and there their wizards studied advanced magic away from the general population.

That all came to an end when the island and the city of Yerosin disappeared. In one night, the island was gone and the city along with it. No warning came, and it was some time before the loss was discovered because no one could get a communication out before the devastation hit. For millennia people have wondered what happened to Yerosin, but the city was forgotten by all but the gnomes who keep the records of their history in Zilargo.

A week or two ago, a small ship carrying valuable cargo was sailing across Lake Brey when it capsized and sank. Two of the sailors, who had water breathing magic, went down with the ship so that they could report its location. They returned with a story of a fantastic city of glowing lights and ghostly gnomish forms at the bottom of Lake Brey. Yerosin had been found at last.

Such a find attracts attention from treasure hunters and scholars alike, and the scholars of Morgrave University knew they had to get a jump on everyone, or else valuable clues to the fate of the city could be lost. They quickly hired adventurers to go to the site and find answers.

Yerosin suffered a great magical calamity that resulted in the island sinking to the depths of the lake, weirdly preserving everyone in a kind of stasis. Gnomes stand as if they frozen in time while walking the streets; in fact, in the midst of all activities. Active spells are frozen too, creating very unusual perpetual illusions. Some spells have taken on life of their own and become living spells, though a living major image wanders around without hurting anyone. Many of the treasures of the gnomes have been looted by underwater creatures over the centuries, but many other treasures remain in hidden places.

The city has not been left idle in all these centuries. Different lake creatures have laired near it from time to time, and even a lich called it home for a time during the early years of the Last War. Now it's the home of a group of sea hags, aquatic demons and aquatic ogres that worship the ancient demon prince Dagon.

This area can be a suitable for a small adventure, or can open up a whole mini-campaign as the adventurers explore the city, fight the monsters there, and eventually try to raise it to the surface. It could even turn out that the original sinking of Yerosin was due to some pact with Dagon that must be undone.

d100 Motivations

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Stormwrack* will be useful for fleshing out the underwater aspects of this scenario and handling underwater combat. The aspects of Dagon and Juiblex are presented in the *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* web enhancement on the Wizards website, and the demon princes themselves are presented in *Fiendish Codex I*.

Forgotten Realms: Set the lost gnome city in the Sea of Fallen Stars, in the south near Turmish. Make sure it is far enough from any sahuagin or aquatic elf settlements that it would not have been discovered.

Eberron: Set this adventure as written in Lake Brey. It is the closest huge lake to the gnome nation of Zilargo.

01-50 Morgrave University is serious about its aims, though it would really like any recovered artifacts as well.

51-70 Scholars from the Library at Korranberg would also like to know about the lost city, and will pay the adventurers for a copy of whatever information they find. This would violate their contract with Morgrave University, but will make them very rich.

71-00 The gnomes of Zilargo are very interested in their lost city as well, but don't want any humans poking around there without responsible gnomes as guides.

Generic: Set this adventure at the bottom of a deep lake or sea, where it might eventually be discovered but is not likely to be.

d20 Modern: This adventure is suited for Atlantis-themed campaigns or areas, and you actually could use the island of Atlantis and extraterrestrial wizards or psionic aliens. Converting the demons should be easy enough.

d100 Complications

01-35 Other creatures live in the lake, and they are hungry.

36-55 An aspect of Dagon has recently appeared among the sea hags, in response to the discovery of the city by the surface folk. Its goal is to protect Dagon's worshippers.

56-70 An aspect of the Faceless Lord, Juiblex, has appeared here as well, to oppose the efforts of the aspect of Dagon and claim the underwater world and its treasures for its dread master.

71-00 The magic that brought down the city could be undone, and that would cause the city to rise and everything in it to return to life. The rising of the island would cause flooding in any towns surrounding Lake Brey.

Death and Burning Blood -- *Forgotten Realms*

The Sword Coast North is a harsh land of cold and mountains and almost constant conflict. Monsters from the Spine of the World threaten anyone who settles too close to the mountain range, and orc hordes sweep from the mountains to decimate the towns. In these lands, people either live in the large cities (which essentially function like islands), or in small groups on their own pursuing a living from the land. Rarely do these two "worlds" meet.

In Silverymoon lives a wizard called Nostar. He is developing a special cold-based spell to use against ice devils, and he needs some frost giant components (including a large patch of unmarked skin). In return for some adventurers going and getting what he needs, he is willing to offer one or more treasure maps that have come into his collection. He would want 10% of whatever is recovered, but he has maps to treasures in ancient Gauntlgtrym (see *Lost Empires of Faerûn*, page 143), Old Illusk (*Lost Empires of Faerûn* page 144), and a lost Netherese city in the edges of the Anauroch. Nostar can also tell them about the general area and where frost giants are most likely to be found.

Once on the way, the adventurers run into a small town that has been decimated by something quite large. Every person in town has been killed, all buildings destroyed, and blood covers everything. The people here were killed horribly, and tracks lead

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Frostburn* should help you with the cold setting, and *Silver Marches* would be useful for the setting information if you are in the **Forgotten Realms**. The aspect of Kostchtchie is detailed in the *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* web enhancement on the Wizards website, and Kostchtchie himself is presented in *Fiendish Codex I*.

Forgotten Realms: Set just south of the Spine of the World, as written.

Eberron: If you don't want to set this adventure on the Frostfell continent, you could have frost giant barbarians led by the aspect of Kostchtchie sail to the northern parts of Khorvaire and attack villages and towns there.

back toward the Lands Against the Wall.

Kostchtchie, demon lord of frost giants, has sent an aspect to a newly converted tribe of frost giants to lead them in bloody conquest of the lands around them. The aspect leads his giants against human settlements as well as other giant settlements -- even other frost giant settlements.

d100 Complications

01-40 Once the adventurers have the frost giant parts and have dealt with the raging tribe, they will attract the attention of other frost giants.

Generic: Barbarian hordes can crop up just about anywhere, but frost giant hordes require cold high peaks. Set this adventure somewhere in the cold north.

d20 Modern: Barbarian hordes are a thing of the past on Modern Earth (at least the real earth), but you might introduce some in Mongolia or Siberia. Giants would exist in a small enclave in an *Urban Arcana* campaign, and in that case the Alps and France or Spain might be an interesting setting.

41-75 There are a lot of other monsters to worry about in the Spine of the World. The trip should be a constant battle, or series of battles, against a lot of frosty opponents.

76-00 The weather will complicate things as well, especially as the adventures get higher into the mountains.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

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Steal This Hook!

Spawn of Evil

By Robert Wiese

Sometimes the very environment presents opportunities for adventure... in general, however, anything that the natural world seems to offer itself often has some secret, intelligent design behind it. That's the case with the following adventure hooks: something in the natural world is really being caused by creatures of evil.

This month, *Steal This Hook* returns to its roots. The past couple of columns have offered what could more properly be called adventure "ideas," where the source was explained along with the hook itself. This month, the hooks are really hooks, with several different directions for adventure offered in the complications. The following hooks feature opportunities to introduce Spawns of Tiamat into your campaign, as described in *Monster Manual IV*. If you don't have this book, then you may need to alter the monsters (or just go get the book--hey, the spawns of Tiamat are pretty cool!).

The Haunted Wood -- *Forgotten Realms*

The Wealdath, between Amn and Tethyr, is known for its fey defenders and tribes of elves. It is also the home of monsters and more than a few dragons. It is a large forest, though, and human settlements on the outskirts can scrape by... if there are not too many of them to offend the forest dwellers. One such village, Wayfarn, is close enough to Brost to be able to transport timber there. The villagers subsist on a low-grade timber industry, and live just beyond the reach of the forest's branches; they are used to the forest's normal inhabitants and take care to remain out of reach or on good terms, whichever works best.

The normal noises of the forest do not include ghostly moaning and recurring screams. Lately, however, these very sounds have been heard. Woodcutters working at the edge of the forest have reported strange haunting noises, even during the day, and periodic screams. A few hardy souls went to investigate the first time the sounds came, but did not return, nor did the people who went to look for them. The villagers now fear that some ghost treant, ghost dragon, or some other horrific creature is haunting this part of the forest, and they are now too afraid to do anything about it. Timber production is falling off, as the villagers don't know what parts of the wood are safe and what parts are haunted by this new danger.

Krovall Myersim, a merchant in Brost who deals in the timber from Wayfarn, has heard the stories from his suppliers and is very concerned. He seeks hardy souls not afraid of a few moans and groans to find the truth and restore timber production.

d100 Motivations

01-40 Krovall is being aboveboard and is not hiding anything from the adventurers.

41-80 Some of the villagers have been converted secretly to the worship of Tiamat by the Cult of the Dragon, and are not giving Krovall all the information that is available. The adventurers are in for some surprises.

81-00 A group of dragonborn of Bahamut (see *Races of the Dragon*) has learned of the greenspawn presence and is watching it to see what the evil creatures are up to. Whether they are friend or foe to the adventurers depends on many factors.

d100 Complications

01-60 The haunting is caused by a new group of greenspawn leapers (or razorfiends, if you want higher level encounters) that have moved into the area. They are associated with the Cult of the Dragon and seek to extend Tiamat's dominion in the area.

61-75 Fey creatures intent on keeping humans out of the Wealdath harass the adventurers throughout their mission, not wanting to kill them so much as drive them out of the forest.

76-85 There are dragons in the forest that are not involved with the greenspawn, but would not like to be bothered or associated with the spawn activities.

86-00 The sounds are being caused by a banshee (from *Monster Manual II*). The greenspawn razorfiends know that it is in the vicinity and use its presence to camouflage their own presence.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. You might find any of the following books useful to flesh out this adventure: *Races of the Wild*, *Races of the Dragon* and *Champions of Ruin*. If you bring in actual green dragons, you may also want to consult *Draconomicon*.

Eberron: This adventure fits very well in Karrnath, at the edge of the Karrnwood far from the main timber activities. It also fits well in Xen'drick.

Generic: This adventure requires a deep woods near small towns or villages. Ideally, the people are somewhat isolated and only see larger civilization every few weeks or months.

d20 Modern: You could set this adventure in New England, or parts of Russia or sub-Saharan Africa.

The Treasure Marsh -- *Eberron*

The Shadow Marches are a mysterious place where few dare go. Swampland covers much of the area, and reclusive orcs and humans populate the habitable places. House Tharashk controls interaction with the outside world through the port at Zarash'ak, but the inner parts of the area remain isolated. Only the large deposits of Eberron dragonshards draw any here at all.

House Orien would like to break House Tharashk's stranglehold on all commerce, and for the past 10 years or so has been working with the native orcs and humans to bypass House Tharashk controls. House Orien has established a trade road from the community of Patrahk'n to Zarash'ak to the south, and this connection has brought goods into Patrahk'n and has begun to raise the quality of life there. House Orien hopes to connect this road with their trade road in Droaam, and thus be able to move Eberron dragonshards out of the nation without House Tharashk interference.

The new trade road through the swamps is dangerous to travel, even with House Orien guards and patrols. Over the years, caravans have disappeared into the swamps, never to be seen again. House Orien counts on some small loss, and one or two caravans a year is within their acceptable limits.

This past year, it has been dry in parts of the Shadow Marches, and the swamp has receded a bit. Rumors started of the lost caravans resurfacing when a lone orc staggered into Patrahk'n claming to have found a huge pile of wagons loaded with dragonshards. He even had a dragonshard or three to validate his claim. Unfortunately, he'd wandered for days in the swamps and did not remember the exact location of the wagons. Since then, several groups have gone into the swamps looking for them, but to no avail. The swamps of the Shadow Marches are loathe to give up their secrets, even when receded.

House Orien is especially interested in finding the wagons, and more importantly discovering what happened so that they can make the roads safer. House Tharashk is also interested, chiefly so they can claim the lost dragonshards and force House Orien out of the Marches. Both can afford to bring in adventurers to look into the problem.

d100 Motivations

01-75 House Orien or House Tharashk (or both) wants the adventurers to find the lost caravan wagons. House Orien wants to know what happened to them, but House Tharashk is less interested unless the knowledge can be used against House Orien.

76-90 Envoys from the Daughters of Sora Kell approach the heroes about investigating the rumors of the treasure wagons. Not only would they like the dragonshards, but they had hopes for increased trade once the House Orien trade road connected Droaam with Zarash'ak. They say they would like to see the trade road go forward, and helping House Orien in this matter would ease the way toward what they want.

91-00 A band of local orcs hooks up with the adventurers to help them find the wagons so that the dragonshards can be returned to the ground where they came from. These orcs--druids and rangers mostly--believe in the Draconic Prophecy, and are sure that the deposits of dragonshards relate in some important way. The keys to part of the Prophecy may be lost if more dragonshards are

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. You might find any of the following books useful to flesh out this adventure: *Races of the Wild*.

Forgotten Realms: This adventure works well in Mortik Swamp, down by Luiren, or even in the Akhkaur Swamp by Lapaliiya. Blackspawn raiders would be well at home in the far south, near where a very powerful black dragon wizard lives in Rethild, the Great Swamp.

Generic: Set this in a place where civilization has to bypass or cross a swamp, moor, or wetlands area conducting trade between nations or cities or feudal lords. The blackspawn raiders are trying to disrupt the trade.

taken out of the Shadow Marches.

d100 Complications

01-50 The caravan wagons were attacked and raided by groups of blackspawn raiders that live deep in the swamps. They were not threatened until the House Orien trade road was established. Further, their natural desire to kill dragonmarked beings leads them to try to disrupt House Orien efforts as much as possible.

51-65 Orcs loyal to the Daughters of Sora Kell are also seeking the lost wagons, as the Daughters of Sora Kell had wanted to steal the dragonshard shipments once they began coming through Droaam. The orcs could be accompanied by blackspawn stalkers, chuuls, medusas from Droaam, or even wyverns.

d20 Modern: The Florida Everglades are a good place for this adventure, as they are sometimes dry and sometimes very wet and impassable. There are communities on all sides, so travel across or around the swamps is common. The blackspawn raiders could have come through a gate from some fantasy world, and may just be discovering the nature of their new world through the goods they take from the trucks they attack.

66-80 The Shadow Marches are full of manifest zones between Eberron and Xoriat (the Realm of Madness), and between Eberron and Kythri (the Churning Chaos). Monsters from these places could have recently come through and attacked the caravans.

81-00 Will o'wisps haunt the swamps as well, feeding off the fears of the local orcs and monsters. The House Orien trade road has opened up more feeding possibilities, and they have begun to cluster toward the road.

Note: you might find the sample blackspawn raider encampment from *Monster Manual IV* useful for this adventure.

The Burning Wood -- *Forgotten Realms*

The Forgotten Forest is a small patch of woods some 90 miles long and 30 miles wide. It is a fragment of the great forest that covered this part of Faerûn ages ago, and is now home to reclusive treants that protect it and mourn the loss of the rest of the forestland. Very little happens in the forest that the treant guardians cannot handle, and visitors are rarely welcomed.

Some 20 miles away lies the elven city of Evereska, the last large settlement of moon and sun elves in Faerûn. One night, the adventurers visiting this elven stronghold see an orange glow coming from the Forgotten Forest. As folks begin to wonder what magic is causing it, a fey creature reaches Evereska and claims that the forest is on fire. The fire is spreading out of control; when the treants and druids puts out one conflagration, the fire erupts in a new place. They don't have time to track down why this is happening, and the treants have reluctantly asked the elves of Evereska for assistance. The elves immediately begin relief and search-and rescue plans, and draft the adventurers to help with or without their consent (they don't force the adventurers to help; they just assume that the adventurers will help and start including them in the plans). If necessary, the elves will offer rewards (perhaps on behalf of the treants) for the adventurers' assistance.

Once in the forest, the adventurers discover that the woods have been burned beyond what anyone imagined. Miles and miles of trees are ablaze, with treants and fey creatures desperately working to stem the tide of flames. Soon after the elves and adventurers begin work to control the fire (or soon after the adventures begin to seek out the reason for the blaze), a new area of trees suddenly bursts into flames.

d100 Motivations

01-50 The treants are desperate for help. They are not hiding anything, and they are not causing the fire.

51-80 A faction of the elves believes the treants have turned evil and need to be purged. Though they did not start the fire, these elves would use it to accomplish their goals of purifying the Forgotten Forest. These elves slow relief efforts and hinder firefighting as subtly as they can. Whether the treants really are evil or not doesn't matter; the elves could be corrupted and the treants innocent, and they would still hinder the rescue efforts.

81-00 The Black Network introduced redspawn firebelchers to the forest to cause this destruction as a way to weaken both the forest creatures and the elves of Evereska. While the elves are focused on this fire catastrophe, the Zhentarim are pulling off some other plan.

d100 Complications

01-75 The fires are caused by a group of redspawn firebelchers that are hunting. They are the guard animals of a group of redspawn arcanisses based in the southeast part of the Graypeak Mountains at present. The whole group is moving through, but the firebelchers needed to stop here and eat.

76-85 Deep within the forest lives a half-dragon (red) treant of immense age and power. Normally it shuns the other treants, as they fear it, but the fires have attracted it. Though a treant, it is dominated by its draconic heritage and wants to see all forests destroyed.

86-00 Within the Graypeak Mountains, redspawn arcanisses and firebelchers are at war with a group of evil stone giants. Though both sides are evil, the collateral damage from the fighting is affecting other creatures that need protection. That is the cause of the fire; spillover from a large battle.

Alternate Rewards

The heroes could be offered a number of rewards from the elves and treants for their assistance. Straight cash or magic items could be dull though, so consider these options.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Races of the Wild* will give you information on elves in general, and you should consult page 87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for information on handling forest fires. Once the heroes move into the Graypeak Mountains, you might find *Races of Stone* useful as well.

Eberron: The Eldeen Reaches are a natural location for this adventure, as the treants and other necessary creatures are present and the redspawn creatures could be moving through looking for enemies of Tiamat. Redspawn firebelchers live in Xen'drik, so that continent is a good setting as well.

Generic: Ideally, you should create a forest with treant occupants next to a hill or mountain range with a city somewhere close by. If not, a town or village will work for the city, and the mountains are not required as the redspawn arcaniss and firebelchers don't live in mountains. The forest fire, on a grand scale, is the centerpoint of the hook.

d20 Modern: There are a lot of possibilities for this hook in the modern world. Forests in Africa or North America are perfect, but forests in Europe work just as well. Modern day firefighting tactics and equipment should change the flow of the adventure somewhat, as the fire can be brought under control faster than in a fantasy world. The redspawn creatures would be Shadow creatures brought through a gate in the center of the forest or in some nearby corporate facility from which they escaped.

- Elven wizards could offer adventuring spellcasters access to rare spells that only the elves know.
- Elven smiths could offer to make elven chain mail or special weapons for the adventurers, in lieu of gold.
- An elven sage could offer his only copy of a treasure map to an old elven treasure chamber deep within Myth Drannor, sparking the heroes to investigate the greatest dungeon in all Faerûn.
- The treants could offer to grant aid in reaching an old wise druid that lives deep within the Forgotten Forest, should the heroes need or want to speak with him. This works well if you set up the druid as the reason the heroes are in the region in the first place.
- Deep within the forest lies a *portal* that leads to the key to a powerful lost Netherese artifact. The treants keep the location of the *portal* secret even from the elves, but will show the heroes where it is and how to use it in return for their help.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

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Steal This Hook!

A Place to Call Home

By Robert Wiese

Some creatures, like most people, need a place to call home, a place safe from the predations of adventurers. But sometimes, home is not so stable after all. Natural disasters and monster incursions can make home a place to defend rather than a place where one is protected.

Flowing Fire -- *Eberron*

In the Mror Holds, the dwarven clans build mountain strongholds and underground cities around their mines. The dwarves are divided into clans, and each clan claims an area of the Holds as its own. Within a dwarven city or fortress, life falls very much along a dwarven mold, even though there are non-dwarves living in the lands too.

The southern part of the Ironroot Mountains is alive with volcanic activity, though the only active volcano is the Fist of Onatar. This area is controlled by Clan Soldorak, a wealthy but greedy and power-hungry clan. All dwarves view the Fist as a sacred place and a great source of magical power, and Soldarak is fortunate to have some control over it. (While the *Eberron Campaign Setting* says that Clan Mroranon controls it, the *Eberron Player's Guide* places it in the hold of Clan Soldarak.)

Part of the defense of this area is a network of fortresses and dwarven mining cities that surround it and control access to the mountain peak itself. In one of these cities, Vonmalk, on the northern side of the Fist and partially underground, the dwarves go about their business of mining... until the day someone reports red magma seeping out from around the foundation of one of the taverns. Patrons fled the tavern as its floor was slowly covered in flowing magma. The dwarves soon found the crack in the earth through which the magma came and filled it with rock, but magma has now begun to flow through other parts of the city. So far, the dwarves have kept ahead of the incidents, but eventually they'll be unable to stop the destruction of their city.

Though the magma is behaving "naturally," and such losses are not unheard-of near the Fist of Onatar, there is one who thinks (or perhaps hopes desperately) that there is some evil force behind the destruction. The lord of Vonmalk, Morrid Soldarak, sees a pattern in the apparently chaotic destruction, and seeks out adventurers to brave the depths and find out if he is right. In exchange for help, he is willing to offer gold, or--better yet--access to dwarven smiths for the production of rare arms and armors.

d100 Motivations

01-40 Lord Morrid Soldarak is aboveboard with the adventurers, because he genuinely believes others may be convinced as well about an evil force.

41-65 Morrid Soldarak is allied with the creatures who are causing the destruction. He has been promised great personal and magical power in exchange for sacrificing his whole city to one of the dark demonic powers behind a Cult of the Dragon Below. The adventurers are a bonus sacrifice to ensure his immortality (the cult has stipulated "outside heroes" as part of its bargain).

66-00 Many in the city see the fall of Vonmalk as imminent. They oppose the wasting of time involved with waiting for adventurers to return (or not). These people interfere with the adventurers' efforts and with Lord Morrid Soldarak, and urge immediate abandonment of the city before any lives are lost. As an option, one or more of these people could secretly be allied with the Cult of the Dragon Below. This person's motivation is to drive off the dwarves so that the Cult can claim the wealth of the nearby mines.

d100 Complications

01-55 The lava is being directed by salamanders and fire elementals toward Vonmalk. They are being controlled by a fiery demon of great power trapped in Khyber. Vonmalk is directly above its prison, and the destruction of the city would open a way for the demon to be freed.

56-65 A powerful efreeti noble wants to use the city to bury access to the prison of a demon that the efreeti imprisoned back in the Age of Demons. The efreeti is directing fire elementals, magma elementals, and even redspawn firebelchers (see *Monster Manual IV*) to divert the flow of lava toward the city.

66-90 The lava is not the only danger facing the brave heroes. The lava is coming from Khyber, and a lot of things live down there. The adventurers face dangers from purple worms to ropers to deep dragons--some of which may be fleeing up into the city away form the lava.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. You'll want to use *Races of Stone* for the dwarven aspects and the mountain dangers. *Underdark* could be useful for the adventure setting itself, and *Fiendish Codex I* could help with any demons you introduce. The *Player's Guide to Eberron* gives good information about the Mror Holds, but you'll also need the *Eberron Campaign Setting*.

Forgotten Realms: The most likely place for this adventure is in the Silver Marches or Sword Coast North areas, in the mountains near the Spine of the World.

Generic: The basic requirement for this adventure is a range of volcanic mountains with connections to the Underdark in your campaign world. Ideally, the dwarven city would be somewhat isolated, but connected enough to a dwarven nation of some kind that the danger could be communicated and help could arrive.

d20 Modern: This adventure could be interesting in Hawaii or anywhere in the Pacific Ring of Fire, as long as you dump the mining aspect and create some other commodity that the dwarves are controlling. The events of this adventure could presage the eruption of a large volcano like Mt. Saint Helens or even Mt. Rainier and the destruction of Seattle.

91-00 Drow living beneath the dwarves want to destroy the city and take control of the mine, in order to enhance their own power within the drow world. They are using powerful creation magic and bound elementals to wreak their chaos.

The Cursed Vale -- *Forgotten Realms*

Stories abound regarding the Vale of Mysar, otherwise known in Asbravn as the Cursed Valley. The Vale of Mysar, named for the first person to find it, is a hidden valley several miles long in the Far Hills. The valley is fertile and temperate, and supports lush grasses, trees, and a variety of animals (and even a few things classified as monsters). It is ideal farmland, with many

farmers relocating to the valley when it was discovered during the time of Netheril. Yet none of them lived to tell the tale. Soon after they arrived, a great storm came over the valley and killed almost everyone. The few that escaped on foot described creatures of lightning coming down from the sky and ghostly riders on ghostly dinosaurs trampling anything that moved during the terrible storm.

There is still great interest in settling the valley, and over the centuries since, farmers have tried to reclaim it. However, something always either drives them out or outright kills them. Some go mad from whispered voices, some reach Asbravn speaking of lightning creatures and ghosts, and some don't return at all. No one has ever found a body in the valley, so the fate of any would-be settler is as much a mystery as why the Vale of Mysar refuses to be settled.

Brista Mylane, a resident of Berdusk, seeks out brave heroes because her foolish brother, Bevlis Mylane, decided to attempt the Vale of Mysar against the wishes of his family. He thought he could break the curse, but he has not returned either. Given the Cursed Valley's reputation, Brista is worried and wants someone to go find her brother. She doesn't have much to offer, but suggests that the monsters of the valley could be quite "valuable" if some were captured or harvested and sold in Asbravn.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Brista is honest about her desires to find her brother... but her cousins don't want the brother found because they would then gain his inheritance. They work to stop the heroes from finding Bevlis and restoring him to life.

51-85 There are rumors of gold and lost treasure in the Vale of Mysar, which is what Brista is really interested in. That's also what her brother was interested in, but he never even made it to the valley--he was killed by a Zhent raiding party.

86-00 Brista insists on accompanying the adventurers. She enspelled her brother to go to the Vale and grow some ingredients for a potion she is making; the ingredients must be harvested in a cursed location. She doesn't plan for the adventurers to leave the Vale alive.

d100 Complications

01-45 The Vale of Mysar is the subject of an ancient curse from the days before Netheril. The Vale was discovered even earlier, but the first settlers squabbled and fought constantly. Finally, violence erupted and several of them were killed. One of these, a

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. To make the magic of the curse (if there is one) different from what the adventurers normally deal with, and thus make the adventure even more interesting, you might use *Magic of Incarnum* or *Tome of Magic*, both of which introduce brand new magic systems.

Eberron: Given the possible existence of dinosaurs, this adventure could be set in the Talenta Plains, or the southern Ironroot Mountains on the Talenta Plains side, or even the Endworld Mountains near the Blade Desert.

Generic: Because the valley for this adventure doesn't have to be hidden, you can set this adventure almost anywhere near enough to civilization that people would want to settle it.

retired priest, spat out a curse that has held to this day, powered by the magic of some ancient deity. Until the curse is broken, no one can settle the valley.

46-55 The curse on the valley called forth the dead that had been buried from even more ancient times. These dead rise as ghosts and specters to drive out any living creatures in the Vale, or to drive them mad. These apparitions ride ghostly dinosaurs.

d20 Modern: Cursed valleys go very well in Scotland and Wales, and fey creatures would make excellent replacements for electrical elementals and ghostly dinosaurs.

56-70 The curse on the valley is nothing more than horrible weather that strikes the valley daily. People who saw electrical elementals imagined them in the danger from the real weather. The ghosts were merely figments of the imagination. However, there is a lich that lives in a tomb at the far end of the valley that uses the weather and its magic to keep everyone out of the valley.

71-00 The Vale is home to a lost tribe of reclusive saurials (or other rare humanoid race such as catfolk) that ride dinosaurs and has remained undetected so far. They created the idea of the curse to be left alone.

Alternate Rewards

Gold is not the only reason to adventure. Here are some ideas for alternative rewards:

- Should the heroes discover the root of the curse and be able to lift it, they could claim (or be rewarded with) a large tract of fertile land in this valley to use for a fortress or other kind of base.
- Ghostly dinosaurs don't lay eggs, but real ones do. Should there be real dinosaurs in the valley, the adventurers could collect eggs and raise their own dinosaur mounts.
- The air, grass or dirt from a cursed valley could be a spell component for some new spell that one of the adventurers is researching, or to a rare spell that they find in another adventure.

The Soul Stealer -- *Forgotten Realms*

In the south of Faerun, further than even the Shaar, lies the nation of Dambrath. A little north and west of there is a tract of ground called the Swagdar, which lies between Dambrath, Halruaa, and Lapaliiya. This rugged place is ringed by forests and mountains that are home to different kinds of trolls, among other dangerous monsters. Travelers pass through this area frequently, and brave both bandits from the Forest of Amtar and trolls (as well as manticores and dragons) from the North Wall, the Wyrmbones, and the Channathwood.

Adventurers traveling through this area on their way to Dambrath, Luiren, or wherever, will see a somewhat large group of trolls rushing toward them from the forest west of Rethmar. The trolls rush past them without even stopping to attack, seeming too worried or fearful. Later, a few mountain trolls pass in a great hurry, also going in the direction of the Forest of Amtar. Other people they pass on the road share similar stories, of trolls and other monsters moving eastward toward the Forest of Amtar.

In Rethmar (or Channathgate), the adventurers will then hear of an apparent attack on the town. Some mountain trolls and cave trolls rushed the walls and battered at them for a bit, but then turned and fled eastward. No one was killed, including none of the trolls. Nonetheless, a group of merchants that make Rethmar their base are worried, and would like to find some stalwart souls to go westward and find out what is scaring the creatures out of the mountains and forests. They are willing to offer great wealth to those brave heroes that can prevent an even bigger disaster from befalling their town (and businesses). One of them, rather than offering wealth, offers an old map that his family acquired in a card game a few years ago. He has not had the time or the inclination to follow it.

d100 Motivations

01-60 The merchants want the adventurers to root out the problem, and hopefully get the monsters to go back home. The status quo serves them very well.

61-90 The merchants, or some of them anyway, seek to use this new, unknown factor to their advantage, and would rather just find out what it is. Then they can work on how to control it, or at least manipulate it into doing what they want.

91-00 This matter has come to the attention of Those Who Harp, and they are concerned that a powerful demon is loose in the region. If the adventurers have any Harper-leaning inclinations, a Harper agent talks to them about looking into the matter. If they don't, the Harper agent manipulates them into investigating anyway by mentioning the innocents that are in danger.

d100 Complications

01-50 A death giant has migrated from Anauroch into the mountains in this region, and has been killing off the trolls. The trolls are afraid of the giant's ability to kill them with its aura despite their healing capabilities, and because of its ability to steal souls.

51-65 A powerful demon with the ability to steal souls and inhabit (possess) bodies was banished into the mountains of this region by a powerful wizard, and has learned how to use the local monsters to increase its own dominion. It hopes to gain enough power to exact revenge on the wizard and return to the Abyss.

66-80 The mountain trolls find themselves in a difficult situation, and could be persuaded to become temporary allies of the adventurers. Knowing which trolls to attack and which to ally with could make the adventure more than a kill-fest.

81-00 The soul stealer (giant or demon) has allied with a powerful dragon from the region. In return for treasure, the dragon harries fleeing monsters and drives creatures toward the soul stealer.

Campaign Adaptation

Races of Stone or *Races of the Wild* could be very useful for fleshing out the forest and mountain sections, and you'll want *Monster Manual III* for the different kinds of trolls. You'll find some mountain troll miniatures in the *War of the Dragon Queen* set, the newest to be released.

Eberron: Mountain trolls live primarily in the mountains around the Eldeen Reaches, so if you want to include them in the adventure you should probably set it there. The Shadowcrags work better, though it would be more reasonable to find the adventurers in Droaam or the Eldeen Reaches near Greenheart.

Generic: Basically, some mountains and forests together are the minimum requirements, with scattered frontier towns that can be threatened by huge trolls. Set this in an area of your campaign world far from the large metropolitan centers.

d20 Modern: This adventure would work best in a future setting on some other planet where trolls are more common.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

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Steal This Hook!

Faith and Deed

By Robert Wiese

Religion, in any world, is responsible for a great deal of war, intolerance, and death. Because religion brings out differences in values and beliefs, conflicts arise. Where there is conflict, there is adventure. And thus, in a world with different competing religions, adventurers find a lot more possibilities for wealth and power. This month's hooks all relate to religion -- specifically the religions of Eberron. Yes, get ready for an all-Eberron set of hooks.

Because religion is complex, the rewards that religious employers can offer vary beyond the usual gold and magic. Priest can offer spells, access to secret knowledge, initiation into secret mysteries, and even access to forbidden magic. Consider rewards for your player characters that cost the church little but look very valuable when using churches to sponsor adventures.

Symbolic Power -- *Eberron*

Lathleer, in Aundair, is a large town between Fairhaven and Ghalt on the House Orien trade road. It is the largest town in that part of Aundair, and it serves as a trading center for the farmers who live in the countryside all around. The people are simple, for the most part, and follow the Sovereign Host. Their temple is run by Baltia Serontain, the ranking priestess of Boldrei in the nation. Baltia and the Vassals that serve with her keep the town safe and spiritually aware.

Baltia is the ranking priestess in Lathleer because she possesses a unique holy symbol that incorporates a Siberys dragonshard. By her own telling, she was led by Boldrei to this rare symbol; she did not seek it out herself. Nor did she seek out the position of importance that came with it, though she does not shirk from whatever service the Host requires.

This afternoon, people gathered for a ritual to ask Boldrei's favor on the construction of some new houses. They waited and waited. Finally another Vassal was sent and found Baltia unconscious in her private chambers within the temple. Her holy symbol was gone. Another Vassal filled in at the ritual, and soon Baltia's personal assistant was on the streets looking for adventurers.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Baltia wants the symbol back because it has personal meaning to her; Boldrei led her to it and clearly intended that she safeguard it for the present.

51-80 Baltia has been corrupted a little by her position, and she wants the symbol back as quietly as possible so

that her position as ranking priest is not jeopardized.

81-00 Baltia is dead, and this is a doppelganger that is replacing her. The doppelganger is worried that the theft, no matter whether the holy symbol is returned or not, will expose its position and the network of criminals that it is tied to, and it would like to avoid exposure. If it cannot, it will arrange for Baltia's "death" to divert suspicion from itself.

d100 Complications

01-25 Baltia was placed here deliberately by other clerics and the royal family. The Siberys dragonshard is keyed to rebuke members of House Cannith (or Orien, or whichever works for you) and Baltia was one link in Queen Aurala's secret force. She won't be pleased that someone discovered the secret of the dragonshard and stole it, but she might reward handsomely those who recover it, especially if no witnesses are left behind.

26-50 The dragonshard piece is part of a larger artifact that was broken off during the Age of Demons. Boldrei "placed it" in Baltia's keeping so that demons from Khyber would not find it. Some rakshasas have discovered its location and sent demons to retrieve it so they could rebuild the artifact.

51-75 The artifact was stolen by Karrnathi agents of the Blood of Vol, who wanted to explore a lost House Cannith foundry at the edge of the Mournland. They believed that the holy symbol would give them power over the supposed traps that House Cannith left behind. The PCs have to chase the Emerald Claw and Blood of Vol villains through the foundry's passages and past construct defenders.

76-00 The holy symbol was stolen by a rival faction of the Sovereign Host that wants to come into control of religion in Lathleer. These Vassals know that the holy symbol is what gives Baltia her status, and so without harming her they can remove her from "power" and attain power themselves simply by removing (and possibly destroying) the holy symbol. It is on the way to a place to be destroyed as the PCs investigate.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Faiths of Eberron* describes dragonshard holy symbols and the religion of the Sovereign Host in great detail. In other campaign worlds, you will need to create a holy symbol artifact of some kind, since the dragonshards don't translate well to other worlds.

Forgotten Realms: The gods of Faerûn are ever-present, so this adventure can really go anywhere so long as you can supply the artifact holy symbol. Mulhorand or Unther might be really good choices though, since they are somewhat more theocratic than other places.

d20 Modern: You may have to strip the powers of the artifact holy symbol, but the basic concept should work in many locations, since religion is a strong force in most countries. If you place your campaign in the Middle East, you'll find that Islam has different factions (and factions of the same religion are one aspect of the adventure hook).

Figment of Your Imagination -- *Eberron*

Silvertide (14 Lharvion) is the holy day among followers of the Silver Flame that commemorates the lycanthropic purge. At Silver Flame temples across Khorvaire, festivals are held, dramas performed, and sermons preached. Aruldusk, in southeastern Thrane, is a small city that follows the Silver Flame devoutly and enjoys a measure of importance and rising prominence. The devotion is due to the nature of the Thranes there, and the rising prominence is due to the lightning rail that passes through the city on its way north and south.

The day of Silvertide in Aruldusk is a festive occasion, as it is everywhere. Youths of the church dramatize the important battles of the lycanthropic purge and display the greatness of the Purifieds that overcame the dread shapechangers. In the afternoon, people gather in front of the temple of the Silver Flame to hear the ranking priest, Ossul Desekhal, give an inspired sermon. Ossul steps from within the church and takes his place at a raised pulpit and raises his hands to silence the cheers that greet his appearance. And then, without a word, he disappears.

Panic ensues, and Purifieds begin using magic and interrogation to determine where Ossul has been taken. What they find is that there is no lingering magic that indicates Ossul was teleported, and he cannot be found anywhere in the vicinity even with *true seeing* spells. He simply vanished into thin air.

Some members of the church, fearing that evil has infiltrated their midst, turn to good-aligned PCs to thwart this evil and recover their missing priest.

d100 Motivations

01-50 A group of paladins contacts the PCs because the PCs are outside the situation. They are sincere in wanting Ossul back and in wanting to know what happened to him.

51-75 One of the priests did discover an illusion, and at the start of the sermon she cast *dispel magic* to expose the corruption she is certain has infested the church. However, she works behind the scenes and does not hire or assist the PCs directly.

76-00 Two priests discovered Ossul missing early in the day, and so they created* this illusion to prevent an uproar on the holy day. They fully intend to investigate Ossul's disappearance, but in secret. However, their power was not enough to maintain the illusion for as long as needed. Now that the focus of Ossul's disappearance has shifted, they contact the PCs to do the investigation they intended to do.

*If one of your complications has Ossul or someone else creating his own illusion, then you can decide whether the priests also discover the illusion or if they created the illusion to cover for Ossul.

d100 Complications

01-50 Ossul was an illusion, one created of magic and shadow-stuff from the Plane of Shadow. The real Ossul was kidnapped a week or so ago, and he is in the hand of priests of the Blood of Vol in Karrnath. He is alive, but soon may become an undead in service to Vol.

51-65 Ossul was always a being of evil, either undead or

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Faiths of Eberron* describes the churches of the Silver Flame and the Blood of Vol. Depending on where you take the adventure, you could find *Races of the Wild* useful, and if you take it into Khyber, then books on the Underdark will be most helpful.

Forgotten Realms: The Silver Flame is similar to the **Forgotten Realms** deity Tyr, but you could draw comparisons with Lathander, Torm, or Selûne as well. So, this adventure might go very well in Silverymoon or the Dalelands.

d20 Modern: An illusionary priest would be the product of magic or of alien technology. Thus, this adventure could fit very well into any part of your campaign

possessed by a demon. He worked quietly to undermine the faith in Aruldusk, and he had made some progress. Last week, he became afraid that one of the priests had discovered his true nature and so he devised this means to escape before he was exposed.

where aliens are trying to exert control over the people of Earth (or some other planet).

66-85 There never was an Ossul Desekhal. A group of other priests created him as a figurehead through whom they could exert control (and focus on the evil they were interested in) without publicly being in charge.

86-00 Ossul Desekhal is not missing at all. He arranged for the illusion of himself so that he could go on a secret mission to thwart some rakshasas from Khyber. The dispelling of the illusion creates problems for him as the PCs come after him and complicate his mission.

Underground Railroad -- *Eberron*

The area around Vulyar, in southern Karrnath, is very rural, even though a House Orien trade road and a lightning rail line pass through the town. The area suffered a lot of damage during the Last War, and the military is still repairing roads, military facilities, and even town buildings. The force of warforged that are assigned to the garrison at Vulyar work under the orders of Captain Sigor Thul and his two squads of humanoid warriors.

Some time ago, warforged began disappearing. At first the losses seemed to come from attacks, but the trickle of warforged became a slow flow, and Captain Thul is now worried that some enemy is picking off his force. Most of the disappearances occur in the rural areas where warforged work on the roads and local barns, but some warforged seem to disappear from within Vulyar itself.

After sending several warforged and three of his humanoid fighters, and learning nothing, Captain Thul approaches adventurers with an offer of reward if they can find out what is happening to his warforged. They are quite valuable, and he cannot just "write them off."

d100 Motivations

01-50 Captain Thul is sincere, and he is not hiding anything from the PCs. Warforged really are disappearing.

51-90 Captain Thul's adjutant is a warforged who is allied with the Lord of Blades, and it is helping in the arrangements to send

Campaign Adaptation

Expand warforged beyond Eberron with these suggestions. *Faiths of Eberron* describes the Lord of Blades in more detail than you'll find in the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting.*

Forgotten Realms: Okay, there are no warforged in Faerûn, so you'd have to replace the warforged with some other race that would be enslaved, such as raptorans or goliaths or saurials, with the

converted warforged into the Mournland. This warforged informs its allies and works to hinder the PCs as much as possible without being discovered.

91-00 Captain Thul hates warforged and would not mind at all if they all disappeared except that they are valuable and he knows that his superiors would take any cost of lost warforged out of his personal wealth or his hide.

d100 Complications

01-50 Just before the disappearances began, a warforged evangelist of the Lord of Blades arrived in Vulyar and began quietly proselytizing to the warforged assigned to Captain Thul. This warforged set up an underground railroad of sorts to smuggle warforged out of Karrnath and into the Mournland. Many of the warforged that have disappeared were converted to the cause of the Lord of Blades and sent away by this means.

51-75 An effigy bulette, created by House Cannith near the end of the Last War, has been plaguing the farmers in the vicinity for a few weeks (or months) now. No one who has seen it has lived.

76-00 Some of the missing warforged were abducted by priests of the Blood of Vol. Vol and her followers are interested in trying to convert warforged into undead, especially the intelligent forms. The warforged could have been requisitioned from the military for experimentation, but these priests are working in secret and do not want to be found out.

followers of the Lord of Blades replaced by sympathetic humans or elves. You could even set it in Thay using human slaves in the role of the warforged. Or, you could actually bring some warforged to Faerûn by having a ship of them crash near a civilization center. They might be considered as constructs rather than as people and put to work for that reason. The role of the followers of the Lord of Blades in this case might be followers of Gond who see them as wondrous sentient creations that should be free.

d20 Modern: Finding warforged in the world may be difficult, but there is no reason that they cannot appear. After all, other fantasy creatures can appear as shadow creatures in **Urban Arcana** campaigns. And there are other planets as well in a modern or future setting. But, you could easily replace them with some other kinds of self-aware robots (a la *Dr. Who*). The adventure might work best on another planet where robot slaves perform labor in areas that humans need gear just to survive.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

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Steal This Hook!

Fear and Horror

By Robert Wiese

Horrific things can happen at any time, and they don't just have to be the gory events of slasher movies. In fact, the more horrific events play on the mind's fears instead of the body's. So this month we present a trio of strange events that can turn into wonderfully horrific scenarios with a little imagination on your part.

This month's hooks include suggestions for using them in a **Ravenloft** campaign, since Wizards of the Coast has its **Ravenloft** supplement coming out this month. If you love the Land of Dread as much as I do, then take a hook or two and have fun scaring your players.

"And the Frogs Came, and Covered the Land . . ." -- *Forgotten Realms*

Laviguer, a farming and mining center in Impiltur and the only major city not on the coast, is a place where life can be normal one moment and strange the next. The nearby Earthspur Mountains provide bloodstone and gold . . . as well as monsters and other strangeness from time to time. For the most part, though, life moves at a steady pace without much interruption. Miners mine, merchants sell, people walk the streets from here to there... *splat!* "Ribbit." And sometimes a frog falls from the sky. "Ribbit."

Without warning, one frog turns into a rain of them, each one landing with a splat and yet surviving unharmed. People run scared and lock themselves inside, but the frogs become so numerous that they begin to find ways in. After a while, the cacophony of ribbiting begins to drive people a little crazy, not to mention the collateral damage of the rain of frogs. Before the day is out, frogs fall on the city for over 5 hours, thousands upon thousands of them. When it is all over, the city is knee-deep in the wriggling creatures, which have nowhere to go and no environment hospitable for them.

The PCs, in town to try the mountain trek to the Vast (or for some other reason), can find any number of people who would hire them to figure out where the frogs came from and whether they portend any danger to Laviguer -- for instance, merchants such as Grisallne the Gifted (human female expert 10/sorcerer 4, Cha 18). Grisallne is already thinking of ways to make money from this event, and so would like the information for different reasons. On the other end of things, a druid named Kotalla is concerned that this marks the beginning of a strange attack on the city, and she wants the PCs to find the source of the frogs and stop whoever is behind it. Kotalla can tell the PCs (assuming they did not already know with a DC 20 Knowledge [nature] check) that the frogs are all the same, and are all indigenous to a remote valley in the Earthfast Mountains some sixty or more miles away. Lastly, there is a little girl named Crytalle that would like the frogs all returned to their point of origin, because she is very concerned about their well-being. She is also wealthy enough to pay for their transport (well, her parents are) should the heroes arrange the logistics.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Whoever hires the PCs is sincere in what he or she says.

51-80 The townsfolk, a superstitious lot, know that some evil magic was behind the attack of frogs, and they want vengeance on the person responsible.

81-00 Someone in town wanted the frogs to rain, possibly to disrupt the trade efforts of a rival, or to create an atmosphere of mistrust and fear.

d100 Complications

01-30 The rain of frogs was caused by Dapex (male elf druid/ wizard/arcane hierophant) who found the frogs annoying and used magic to expel every last one of them from the valley that he claimed as his own. However, because they were part of the food chain, Dapex will have other problems soon enough.

31-50 In the wake of the frogs, another vastly more dangerous creature comes calling. A red dragon that lairs in the Earthfast Mountains saw the stream of frogs and followed it east as it went. Now that it has found Laviguer, it wants treasure.

51-70 A cult of the demon lord Obox-ob has established itself in the valley, and it is using the valley to grow some new vermin for attacking mountain communities. The rare frogs of the valley are natural predators of the new vermin, and in typical demon fashion the cultists removed the frogs rather than find a different valley. The vermin will be let loose on Laviguer as a first test if their creators are not stopped. (In this case, feel free to make the vermin appear as something particularly creepy to your characters.)

71-90 Among the frogs, some slaadi begin terrorizing the populace as soon as they land, throwing other frogs around in addition to their normal attack modes.

91-00 Way more frogs fell on Laviguer than lived in the valley. Where did the rest come from? Was this some kind of demonic attack? Does the trouble extend to another world, or another plane?

Campaign Adaptation

A rain of frogs can happen just about anywhere with a little help. Think about inflicting it on these campaign worlds.

Eberron: Set this adventure in Dragonroost, in Zilargo. The frogs can come from a valley in the Seawall Mountains. You might even get the goblin nation of Darguun involved as villains.

Ravenloft: Stage a rain of frogs in Viktal or Kellee, in Tepest. The people there are beset by horrors from the woods on a regular basis, but a rain of frogs should really make them troubled.

Generic: Anywhere will do. The valley that is home to the frogs doesn't even have to be close.

d20 Modern: A lot of frogs naturally brings to mind Egypt and Biblical plagues. Some alien power based in the Sudan could be modeling their terror attacks on ancient world curses.

"But What I Hate I Do . . ." -- *Eberron*

Athandra, sitting near the center of Thrane, is home to the adventuring group called the Six Aeylisors (they are not related, but the original group was). The Six hunt treasure across Khorvaire and even on Xen'drik.

Lately, they returned from the Demon Wastes with a huge treasure of gold, figurines, jewels, and a few magic items (which they kept). The rest they sold to traders. The night after the sale was completed, the first body was found.

No one knows who killed Mishrie, daughter of a tavern owner, but her manner of death is clear: She was stabbed repeatedly. The next few bodies were killed in different ways: decapitation, drowning in a well, being buried alive, and so forth. Either the murderer liked to vary his or her technique, or there are a number of murderers. No one realizes that there might be a connection to the treasure brought back by the Six, because the Six left town on another adventure before the third body was found.

The constabulary of Athandra begins to get desperate after the eleventh victim is found with no suspects. They send to Sigilstar for some magical help in finding the killer(s), and the authorities there send the PCs.

d100 Motivations

01-25 The killings are being caused by a curse on the treasure's figurines. Once the figurines are removed from their place of safety, they begin infecting random people with a magical mental disease that turns them into vicious killers. As the figurines move around, so does the curse spread.

26-50 The killings are caused by a ghost that inhabits part of the treasure. The ghost is that of an ancient murderer who now can continue his "craft" only by possessing others and using them to kill.

51-75 The killings are the result of recent lycanthrope activity in the region. The lycanthropes seek revenge on the Six for some slain pack members, so they want to slay anyone known to the Six (which pretty much means the whole town). They use different methods to disguise their true nature.

76-00 The head law officer in Athandra is possessed by a demon and is behind all the attacks, whether he knows it or not. The demon may or may not be related to the treasure brought back by the Six Aeylisors.

d100 Complications

01-25 All of the murder victims return as ghosts themselves, looking for final rest. However, along the way they are also looking for vengeance against their killer, and they are not very discriminate upon whom they take vengeance.

Campaign Adaptation

If you're not running an Eberron campaign, you can still adapt this idea. You might find concepts in *Ghostwalk* useful, though the setting itself won't be. *Libris Mortis* could also be valuable.

Forgotten Realms: This is a good adventure for anywhere in the Realms really, but you might especially try one of the cities of Sembia or the Dragon Coast.

Ravenloft: This adventure is well suited to the stark urban poverty of Nova Vaasa, though it could work well in Port-a-Lucine in Dementlieu.

Generic: The city in which this adventure takes place needs to be large enough that the murders don't dominate the news, and small enough that they are important (and that there are not magical dwellers who would just wave their hands and solve the problem).

d20 Modern: Though this could happen anywhere, especially in a Lovecraftian New England, you might consider Brazil for this adventure instead; the South

26-65 The Six Aeylisors are carrying the curse with them, and they are on their way to much more populated cities such as Flamekeep.

American elements could make the story very interesting if your PCs don't already come from South America.

66-85 A group of thieves is using the situation, and the fact that the constabulary is distracted by the murders, to their advantage and have started a crime spree. Some of their crimes could include murder, which would further confuse the investigation.

86-00 The curse prevents contact with the dead victims, so *speak with dead,raise dead,* and the likeare useless as investigative tools.

"I Fade Away Like an Evening Shadow" -- *Forgotten Realms*

Cimbar, the nominal capitol of Chessenta, is a city known for the arts and culture as well as for strength of sword-arm. Indeed, the populace is required to participate in the arts, philosophy, and music. It is also known for its colleges of sages, artists, and wizards. The college of sages is always seeking to expand its collection of old (and new) tomes, and recently that has brought on a problem.

Adventurers unearthed a collection of old tomes from the days of Netheril, and they sold them at a hefty profit to the college of sages. The sages, seeing a need for a new "collection" area, opened an old storage room that had not been used in hundreds of years. Within, the sages had a lot of junk cleared out. Among this junk were a number of bones of humans, rats, and dogs.

d100 Motivations

01-45 Kleffes is on the up-and-up about everything he says. He really does want the problem solved with as little fuss as possible.

46-70 Kleffes is sincere in wanting to know what is going on, but he doesn't care about his fellow sages nearly as much as he says he does. There is competition among sages in the same fields, and, should a rival die, then Kleffes would become more prominent. Kleffes would never kill anyone himself, though.

71-00 Kleffes doesn't care about the sages. He is actually an agent for a sage's college in Soorenar and sees this as a chance to make this college look foolish (and thus lose station). He wants all the details made as public as possible.

d100 Complications

01-40 The storeroom contained the bones of some victims of a prior warlord of Chessenta, and, when the bones were disturbed,

the victims returned as shadows. Now they haunt the hallways, striking from stealth and trying to remain undetected as they drain the strength away from the sages.

41-60 There is a lot of light for reading throughout the library, but the shadows avoid it and strike at those in book storage rooms or those going to or from somewhere. The shadows stay in the walls as much as possible.

61-80 Too late! As the PCs begin their investigation, they find a dead sage slumped at a table near the old storeroom. He has been dead for a few hours, and he has become one more shadow that the PCs will have to fight eventually.

81-90 Should the PCs somehow talk to a shadow or to the corpses that were removed from the room, they can learn the (false) information that the shadows can be put to rest if the bones are buried honorably with a full description of the crimes against them. If anyone does this, the shadows take a week off from hunting sages to lull people into thinking the problem has gone away.

91-00 The storeroom contains a *portal* linking the room to the Plane of Shadow. Other shadow creatures can come through as well should the *portal* be opened.

Campaign Adaptation

This creepy adventure can work in many campaign worlds, including yours. *Libris Mortis* might be useful for the shadows. You could also work some shadow magic into the adventure using *Tome of Magic*.

Eberron: This adventure is practically begging to be set in the Library of Korranberg, but you might consider Morgrave University or a large city in Aundair.

Ravenloft: Use a bardic library in Skald, in Kartakass, as the setting for this adventure. The shadowy threat contrasts well with the general joyfulness of Kartakass.

Generic: Any sage college will do, or even a college of wizardry or a bardic college. The sages are better because they are less likely to have the magical resources to solve the problem themselves.

d20 Modern: There are libraries everywhere, and museums work just as well. How about the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian, or the British Museum?

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

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Steal This Hook!

Halfling Crimes

By Robert Wiese

It seems that halflings get a bad reputation when they live in human-dominated areas. Crimes are always blamed on them. Do halflings turn to crime because the crimes are blamed on them anyway, or are the crimes blamed on halflings in general because a lot of crimes are committed by halflings? After all, the favored class for halfling is rogue. This month, we further this distressing stereotype by looking at some hooks involving halflings and crime.

Fund Raiser -- *Eberron*

Wroat, the capital of Breland, is not as large or as "active" as Sharn, but it is nonetheless a center of trade and commerce as well as the center of the Brelish government. Merchants who have offices in Sharn also have them in Wroat, because the presence of so many officials and aristocrats holds the promise of lucrative business. Honest businesspeople are not the only ones who think so, either. A couple of weeks ago, some group stole all of the jewelry in the locked storerooms of the Devirr family jewelers. The next night, the home of a scion of House Orien was robbed, and more than 10,000 gp worth of goods were taken. And so it continued until the present. Every night brought another robbery, and thousands of gold worth of goods disappeared into nowhere.

It was not until the night before last that anyone had a clue as to the identity of the thieves. Some adventurers, out for a night of fun, came out of a tavern and walked (or staggered) back to their lodgings. On the way, they saw a group of halflings come out of the back of a warehouse carrying bags. The halflings quickly lost the adventurers and disappeared into sewer holes and other small places where the larger folk could not follow.

Wroat has some known "thieves' guilds," and the thefts were only surprising in their frequency, audacity, and in the amount that was taken. The royal guard and the city watch both keep track of groups of known thieves and roots them out where possible. But the groups don't disappear completely, and so everyone relies on a kind of code of honor to avoid losing too much (the thieves enjoy less vigorous attempts to root them out if they steal with restraint, and they sometimes bribe the watch). But this amount of thief activity is making the merchants and aristocrats angry, and they are demanding that something be done about the "thief problem."

Captain Rand d'Medani, a cunning half-elf who has risen to this position through effort rather than connections, thinks that something is going on behind the scenes, so to speak, and he'd like to know what that is before cracking down on halfling guilds. Because city watch personnel are usually terrible at streetwork and infiltration,

he hires the adventurers for 20 gp per day, plus hazard pay if things get really dangerous. In addition, they can keep, without reporting to him, anything that they happen to find that is not part of the stolen items from the recent string of robberies.

d100 Motivations

01-35 Rand d'Medani is on the up-and-up, and provides what assistance he can in a covert manner.

36-80 Rand d'Medani knows who is perpetrating the robberies (though he won't tell the adventurers outright), but he really doesn't know why. He wants to know, so that he can possibly use that knowledge to his own benefit. Rand is not above making a gold or 100 on the side.

81-00 Rand d'Medani is a member of sorts of the halfling burglars, or a close friend, and helps them in exchange for a small cut. However, he is feeling the pressure to eradicate the robbers, and pressure from the aristocracy cannot be ignored. He doesn't know quite how to handle the situation to keep the status quo.

d100 Complications

01-30 The halflings need the money to placate an enemy group that threatens their homeland. Should the adventurers find this out, they have to deal with agents of that enemy group and his aberration lackeys.

31-55 The halflings are innocent; someone is pinning the crimes on them.

56-75 There are no halflings at all. The supposed halflings are actually transformed demons or devils trying to raise money to use in corrupting important mortals.

76-00 The stolen goods have already been moved out of the city and to somewhere else. The people pushing for the investigation really want their stuff back more than they want any perpetrators caught, and any solution that does not involve the recovery of all stolen goods is not acceptable. The goods could be dispersed in merchant caravans by now going to the far corners of the world, or they could be in the lair of a black dragon . . .

Campaign Adaptation

Halfling burglars are not confined to **Eberron**. Use them in any campaign world. You can find out all about halflings in *Races of the Wild*, and you can read as much about Wroat as there is to know in *Five Nations*.

Forgotten Realms: Go for Waterdeep with this adventure hook. There is a lot written about Waterdeep, though, so you'll have to exercise some care in inserting these halflings.

Generic: Any city can support this adventure, but centers of commerce and politics are better. You can add more tension that way.

d20 Modern: Halflings for the modern day are presented in *Urban Arcana*. If you don't want to use them, you can use medusas or kobolds or even well-built robots working for mad scientists. The important thing is that someone needs a lot of cash right now. Consider a national capital for the setting, such as Cairo, Washington DC, Brasilia (the capital of Brazil), or London.

The Three Hagsketeers -- *Forgotten Realms*

Tethyr, a recovering power along the western coast of Faerûn, is home to a number of halflings as well as the dominant humans. Some halflings live in the large cities, and others live in their own communities near to the big cities but still far enough away to maintain the halflings' more rural way of life. One such

community, near to Saradush and the Forest of Mir, is having troubles that are not its fault.

Along the Zazesspur-Saradush trade route, people have started disappearing. Reports of robberies have also trickled in. The victims are usually lone travelers or small groups of travelers, but two merchant caravans have been attacked. One drove off the attackers, and one was lost completely. Among the victims, the reports are the same: a trio of halflings leads a group of monsters in the attacks.

Unrest has grown against the halfling community near Saradush, called Lydeskin's Grotto, because everyone who can describe the halfling villains describes a different set of halflings. Thus, the people are beginning to believe that everyone in the halfling community is involved. This has all the halflings of the land worried, because it is a short step from blaming one settlement to driving all halflings out of the country. In desperation, halflings from Lydeskin's Grotto have begun looking for mercenaries or adventurers or do-gooders who can help uncover what is really behind the crimes.

d100 Motivations

01-35 The PCs are approached by three halflings, who are really hags in shapechanged form. They are behind the crimes and want the inevitable investigators not to suspect them.

36-60 Unrest against all halflings is growing rapidly, and there are some who would hire the PCs to eradicate any halflings they happen to find. ("If you get them all, you'll probably get the guilty ones.")

61-90 The beleaguered halflings really need help, since they are likely to be driven out of the land or killed soon.

91-00 The halflings really are behind the crimes; they are working in association with a trio of hags to disrupt trade so that they can charge protection money.

d100 Complications

01-65 A trio of shapechanged halflings is committing the crimes, using different looks each time. They are not trying to bring trouble to Lydeskin's Grotto specifically; they just like blaming their crimes on halflings. They have some ogres in tow.

66-90 The trail of the villains leads into the Forest of Mir, which is populated by two elven tribes as well as evil goblinkind, trolls, and ogres.

91-95 There is a decaying *mythal* in the north part of the Forest of

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for using this adventure in different campaign worlds. Halflings are described in *Races of the Wild*, and greenspawn of Tiamat are presented in *Monster Manual IV*.

Eberron: Set this adventure in western Breland, near Shavalant. The people there already dislike Cyran refugees, and you can probably link the halfling community to Cyre in some way to drive the adventure into even more dangerous paths.

Generic: The basic setting includes a halfling village near to a trade route or trade center, and a forest or some such monster abode close enough to provide any monsters that you need.

d20 Modern: You'd have to convert hags for **d20 Modern** campaigns, but halflings might be strange enough that they would garner suspicion just for being themselves, and that would help immensely. You could use any shapechanging monster instead of hags. This probably would go over well in Ireland or Wales, but it might be interesting in Eastern Europe or southern

Mir, and the villains use its effects to throw off pursuers (the *mythal* turns helpful magic into harmful magic).

Africa, too.

96-00 The hags actually work for a great power, such as a green dragon or a group of drow. A green dragon might have greenspawn razorfiends and greenspawn sneaks working for it.

Possible Rewards

Because different groups could hire the adventurers, there are different possible rewards available. Residents of Sembia understand that there are valuable things besides money, and also that some of those valuable things don't cost as much as others do.

Hired by the City Guard: The city guard has a number of things it can offer.

- It can offer to overlook some crimes that the PCs might commit in the future (for whatever reason).
- It could offer to help secure the early release of a friend of the PCs who was incarcerated (or will be).
- Certain guards could have information of value to the adventurers while they are in Selgaunt. For example, if their real mission here involves some noble house, some of the guards might have inside information and diagrams of the noble's house and businesses.
- Some guards might be able to provide an introduction for the PCs to a noble who could become their patron while in the city.
- And of course, they can just pay the reward on Drayer.

Hired by the Crimson Daggers: The Crimson Daggers have the least to offer, but they can still make a good bargain.

- The Crimson Daggers are loathe to part with money, but they are not loathe to part with treasure maps to distant locales that they will never visit. They could have a map that leads to treasure anywhere in your campaign world that you want to send the PCs next.
- The Crimson Daggers are in the protection business, and they could offer to shadow the PCs and "make sure they're safe" while in the city. This means that they will try not to let anyone else kill the PCs, but won't promise not to kill them themselves.
- Members of the Crimson Daggers know people, and they could connect the PCs with someone who could sell them things they cannot get in the regular markets.

Hired by the Shadow Knives: The Shadow Knives would rather just use the PCs and kill them, and they may well try to do that, but they do have to offer something to entice the PCs to take the job.

- The Shadow Knives are connected to mages, and especially necromancers. They can offer unknown or rare spells to the PC spellcasters.
- The Shadow Knives are connected through bribery to the Hulorn (the ruler of Selgaunt), and they can offer his personal attention and patronage if the PCs are successful.
- The Shadow Knives have acquired a number of properties in the distant parts of Sembia, and they can offer one of these to the PCs as payment. This plot of land could be a harmless farm, or a ruined estate with a monster-filled dungeon.

- The Shadow Knives can offer the PCs their lives. In short, once the PCs complete the mission, the Shadow Knives set up a situation where they could clearly kill the PCs, and then offer mercy and drive the PCs out of Selgaunt instead.

Field Trip -- *Forgotten Realms*

Drayer Minoe is known to Selgaunt in many guises. Unfortunately, the one that mattered was exposed because of inept associates: Drayer is a master thief. A lot of thieves operate in Selgaunt, as one would expect of the largest merchant city in Sembia, but Drayer has been connected to several very important crimes. Further, he had angered both the city authorities and two rival thief groups, and they all want him dead. The sticking point is that they all want to kill him themselves and make sure the body is never found.

Some see Drayer as a dashing scion of the nobility, some as a quiet philosopher, and some as a dexterous circus performer. He has much in common with the halflings he has befriended in Selgaunt, except his height: He is nearly 6 feet tall. Using magic, his halfling friends slipped him out of town with one of their caravans, and if his disguise magic had not failed six days later, he would be home free. But it did, and someone reported his whereabouts to different parties in Selgaunt (collecting fees every time). Thus, there are a number of people who would hire adventurers to track down this halfling caravan and bring Drayer Minoe back to Selgaunt (but not necessarily to the law).

There is only one problem. The halfling caravan has disappeared since it was reported to those in Selgaunt. As in, without a trace. The adventurers discover this when they try to find it.

d100 Motivations

01-35 The Selgaunt city guards want Drayer because he is an independent in a city where the guilds all bribe the guard for freedom to operate (within limits). Free agents are rooted out as soon as possible lest they disturb the delicate balance of money flow into the pockets of the guards. They claim that they want him because he is a criminal, though, and that he must be brought to justice. If the adventurers turn Drayer over to the guards, he is executed as a pirate on trumped-up charges and his body "lost" forever.

36-70 The Crimson Daggers, a small but effective thieves' guild, want Drayer because he stole from a noble that paid the Crimson Daggers for protection. Thus, the Crimson Daggers look bad and may lose business, and the noble is demanding that the Daggers make good on what was stolen. They claim that they want back what Drayer stole, and don't need Drayer himself, but that having Drayer would go a long way toward shoring up their business interests. Drayer would be sold into slavery if brought to these people.

71-00 A much larger guild, the Shadow Knives, wants Drayer for quite a different reason -- they want the information he has on all the families and merchants, and plan on ripping it out of his mind. After that, who

knows? They claim, however, that they want to offer Drayer asylum and a way to continue to live in Selgaunt. If the heroes turn Drayer over to this party, then he ends up a mindless undead protecting some necromancer's private lab.

d100 Complications

01-30 The halfling caravan passed a little too close to a place at the edge of the Arch Wood where a Cult of the Dragon operation was in the planning stages. The cultists, led by greenspawn razorfiends (see *Monster Manual IV*), decimated the caravan and took a number of prisoners (including Drayer Minoe). These prisoners are destined for some vile use by the leaders of the Cult unless the adventurers rescue them.

31-55 The caravan was detoured off the main road and passed through a *portal* to the Abyssal Plane of Spirac. The halflings and Drayer Minoe know they are in trouble, but the *portal* was one-way and they cannot return unless someone finds them and helps. Spirac is the Abyssal hunting ground, and there are a lot of demons that would love to hunt human adventurers.

56-75 The caravan was a ruse the whole time, concocted by someone who wanted to capture Drayer for her own reasons. Possibly this was a former scorned lover seeking revenge or to twist Drayer's love toward her again. Fiendish DMs might make the lover a succubus or a lilitu (see page 43 of *Fiendish Codex I*). The halflings were hired for the part, and the wagons contained only false goods or were empty. They were ditched in Ordulin, where Drayer and his lover capturer may still be.

76-00 Drayer Minoe is also a master murderer, and one night after making friends with everyone and gaining their trust he murdered everyone in the caravan and buried their bodies in the Arch Wood. He hid the wagons and set off on foot through the Arch Wood into Archendale, where his trail is lost without some magical means to pick it up again.

Campaign Adaptation

Place this halfling caravan mystery in your campaign world, whatever that happens to be. As noted before, you can find out all about halflings in *Races of the Wild*. *Fiendish Codex I* or *Monster Manual IV* will be useful if you use some of the complications.

Eberron: This adventure would work well starting in Korth, the capitol of Karrnath. The caravan could be on its way to the Talenta Plains, the homeland of halflings in Khorvaire, when it disappears. If you use the alternate plane location, then somehow Eberron was co-terminus with Shavarath or Kythri.

Generic: A large city with several thieves' guilds is the starting point for this adventure, but after that it can go anywhere.

d20 Modern: Imagine a bunch of halflings driving from Las Vegas to New York in big rigs and disappearing somewhere in Ohio or Nebraska. Road trip? Yipes.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

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Steal This Hook!

Devilish Doings

By Robert Wiese

When devils get involved with a scheme, the complexity of it all spirals almost beyond mortal imagining. And this is not surprising, as hell is perhaps the greatest bureaucracy in all of existence. All the devils plan and plot and try to outplot each other without being, in turn, outplotted. This month, the new *Fiendish Codex II: Tyrants of Hell* comes out, and boy is it cool. It contains a whole lot on devils, including a section on playing devils and some information about the deviousness of devilish plots. Thus, this month's hooks all involve devils in some way. So enjoy, and we may see you again next year. Unless the devils get us, that is.

Devils from the Sea -- *Forgotten Realms*

Ravens Bluff has been called the City of Adventurers, because almost nowhere else on all of Faerûn will you find so many in one place. The Vast is a dangerous place, and something always happens that requires a hero. This night is no exception. The PCs are walking the docks of the city, perhaps looking to spend the evening at the unique underwater bar called Sharkey's. The sea, however, comes to them as dark shapes rise from the waters and move into the pools of light created by the street lamps. They also swarm the ships tied to the docks, and start killing everything that walks on land. The creatures, sahuagin, seem driven to recklessness and their attack has a ferocity not normally reported for sahuagin attacks.

Once the PCs have helped drive the devils of the sea back beneath the waves, they are approached by Corwin Stark, a representative of the Merchant's Guild. Stark invites them into a tavern, and in true Ravens Bluff style seeks their help in preventing further attacks. This is the second, he reports, in the last month. He has wealth to offer, but he also knows that the sahuagin probably have wealth too, and the less he can offer the PCs the better.

d100 Motivations

01-40 The merchants are sincere; they really want the attacks prevented.

41-65 One merchant has made an alliance with the sahuagin and is using them against his or her rivals.

66-85 The Merchant's Guild senior members really want to enslave the sahuagin, and think they can do so. They want the PCs to find the sahuagin and report their location.

86-00 Some demons led by an aspect of Demogorgon, along with some ixitachitl, are working against the sahuagin, but don't want interference from the PCs either.

d100 Complications

01-50 The sahuagin raids, which have happened all along the coast of the Vast as well as in Sembia, are motivated by the presence of an aspect of Sekolah (watch for the web enhancement for *Fiendish Codex II: Tyrants of Hell* on the Wizards website), the sharklike god of the sahuagin. He is driving the creatures to show greater devotion to their devilish god.

51-75 The raids have been undertaken by different clans of sahuagin. Each of the clans involved is raiding the surface for weapons and wealth to use in the conflict in which the clans are involved. If not stopped, the conflict could devastate cities along the Sea of Fallen Stars.

76-90 Groups of aquatic ghouls are following the sahuagin and using the chaos of the attacks to claim weakened victims to eat.

91-00 A blue dragon is stirring up conflict among the sahuagin, and then picking them off slowly as they return from their raids with loot. Thus, the dragon increases its treasure hoard. [You might want the blue dragon to be Gargantuan, so you can use the new **D&D** Icons Gargantuan blue dragon mini coming out in January.]

Campaign Adaptation

Sahuagin raids are pretty common in any campaign world in which the creatures exist. Here are some suggestions for other campaigns. You may find *Stormwrack* very useful for the underwater part of the adventure, and *Fiendish Codex II: Tyrants of Hell* can help with the general tactics of devils. If you actually use Ravens Bluff as the setting, you might want to get your hands on *LC4: Port of Ravens Bluff* (a very old TSR publication) for information about the dockside businesses. *Cityscape* could also be useful in this regard.

Eberron: Sahuagin are prominent underneath the main water approach to Xen'drik, so that might be a good place for this adventure.

Generic: A coast near a sahuagin settlement is all you need. It doesn't even have to be a coast, since the sahuagin could be raiding ships or floating cities or small island communities. Having some aquatic elves nearby could add some complications.

d20 Modern: I can picture sahuagin living in the Ring of Fire area of the Pacific, so perhaps Japan would be a good site for this adventure. Or Australia.

Heartfelt Devotion -- *Eberron*

Walking the bridges that make up the "streets" of Sharn can be dangerous. Things can happen to you at any time -- especially at night when fog obscures the way on the upper walkway levels. This particular night, the PCs are on their way through the fog to somewhere when they hear a muffled scream and then a thunk. Running to the scene, they find either nothing at all or track marks of someone being dragged away, or maybe even a couple people dragging someone away.

They later find that a number of people have disappeared in the last few months in different ways. It's hard to determine exactly how many are connected because lots of people disappear in Sharn, but they eventually find a common link with enough of the victims to see that there is something going on.

If the PCs are not interested in looking into the one incident they (almost) witnessed, then a day or so after telling someone about it they are approached by the wife of a merchant who disappeared two months ago. She wants to hire them to find out what happened to her husband, and she hopes that there is some connection between her husband's disappearance and what the PCs told that they saw.

d100 Motivations

01-30 The merchant's wife, if she comes into it, is sincere.

31-60 The merchant's wife is a devil in disguise (or a demon, depending on who is behind the kidnappings). This creature does want the PCs to solve the disappearances, because that weakens the other side's current plan without any effort on the outsider's part.

61-75 Law enforcement officers don't want the PCs involved, and they hinder the PCs as much as is reasonably possible. One of the victims is a high-profile NPC and this person (or someone else close to the NPC) doesn't want certain details to come out.

76-00 The merchant's wife is a cultist who hires the PCs. Then the cult kidnaps anyone the PCs talk to, so that all the disappearances can be blamed on the PCs.

d100 Complications

01-40 Glasya, recently made an archdevil, seeks more power to use in the manipulative games that archdevils play. She hopes to open a large *portal* from Shavarath to Eberron and pull a whole city into the plane of endless conflict. This she would add to her realm. She needs a lot of hearts to be sacrificed to complete the spell, and her cult in Sharn has been collecting them. Over sixty people are imprisoned in the abandoned levels at the bottom of one of the oldest towers.

41-55 In addition to the above, a demon lord has learned of the plan and wishes to co-opt the whole endeavor at the last minute and steal the city out of Glaysa's grasp.

56-65 A cult that thinks it is following a devil is actually enslaved to a rakshasa. This creature is trying to free one of the greater rakshasas from its imprisonment in Khyber, and it needs living victims to do so.

Campaign Adaptation

Cityscape would probably be quite useful for much of this adventure, though you could make the city part smaller and move the action to the wilderness. In that case, *Races of the Wild* or one of the environment-series books might be useful to you. And, of course, the two *Fiendish Codex* books should help if you play up the demon/devilish aspects.

Forgotten Realms: Any large city with a diverse religious panorama is suitable. Waterdeep may seem the best, but Selgaunt in Sembia is equally good.

Generic: Any large city with a diverse religious panorama is suitable. I just said that, didn't I?

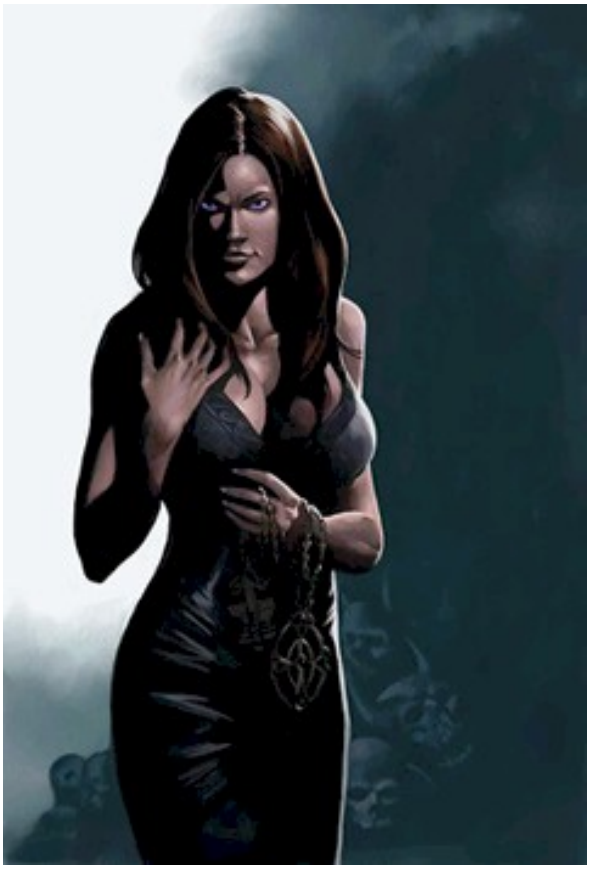
d20 Modern: Any large . . . okay, okay. Try London, or Rome, or Cairo, or even Shanghai.

66-85 Whoever is behind the kidnappings, the PCs are the final planned sacrifices. They are being drawn into the adventure by false information so that they come to false conclusions. At the "final" battle, if they are slain because they have miscalculated the opposition, whatever ritual the DM has chosen is completed.

86-00 The Blood of Vol is stealing the victims from the kidnappers and making them into vampire servants of Vol.

Beauty and the Ogres -- *Forgotten Realms*

Triel, south of the Western Heartlands, is a bustling but small town on the road between Waterdeep and Scornubel. A lot of trade passes through the town, but since it is not an endpoint, the merchants there do not see as much wealth as they might in Scornubel. The town has a direct road to Elturel, so folk can make some money by means other than service industries.



The Lord Mayor of Triel constantly schemes to bring more money into the city and more prestige to himself. Aside from a lot of raw talent, he is blessed (sort of) with a beautiful daughter named Melomine, who has a reputation for hanging with a lower class of crowd than her father would want. She also has a certain reputation among the young men. One evening, just after the PCs arrive in town, she returns from a party to her father's house and disappears. Tracks at the scene show that her coach stopped and a number of ogres surrounded it. No human tracks leave the area, but two of the ogres were carrying something heavy. A few drops of blood fell between the tracks as they led out town.

The following morning, the lord mayor's chamberlain finds the PCs where they are staying and hires them to find the missing girl. He offers either money or a part interest in a business venture that the lord mayor has just started.

d100 Motivations

01-40 The lord mayor is sincere in wanting his daughter back, and the chamberlain does not lie to the PCs.

41-60 The lord mayor sold his daughter, who was too loose for his

reputation to bear, to the ogres to pay off a debt.

61-80 Merchants in Elturel are responsible for the kidnapping, and they plan to use the girl as leverage to acquire controlling interest in the lord mayor's newest venture.

81-00 The lord mayor is sincere, but he is afraid that a political rival is behind the kidnapping. He doesn't want to be forced into an awkward situation and will sacrifice the girl, but he wants to try to find her first.

d100 Complications

01-35 Melomine is actually a pleasure devil (see *Fiendish Codex II: Tyrants of Hell*) and has been for some time. The real Melomine was killed over a year ago, and the pleasure devil has been using her identity to corrupt the local priests and law officials. That is why Melomine is known to be somewhat loose with her affections. She wants to move on, so she set up this escape from Triel.

36-50 While the PCs are looking for Melomine, the lord mayor receives an ultimatum and must release some dangerous criminals to buy time. The PCs have to track them down too.

51-65 If Melomine dies (the PCs fail), she returns as a ghost and haunts the PCs and her father until put to rest.

66-90 While the PCs are searching, some spawns of Tiamat or cultists of Malcanthet (see *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss*) grab Melomine from the ogres and leave few clues behind. The PCs have to contend with this new factor.

91-00 Melomine is actually a succubus servitor of Malcanthet, and an erinyes or a pleasure devil becomes allied with the PCs in a dubious way against the common demonic threat. The rewards from devils for success could be very interesting, including access to feats in *Fiendish Codex II: Tyrants of Hell*.

Campaign Adaptation

Kidnappings are, unfortunately, oft-heard news stories, plus they aren't unusual in most published campaign settings. Thus, most campaign worlds can support this adventure. This adventure makes heavy use of material from *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* and *Fiendish Codex II: Tyrants of Hell*. You might also want the new *Cityscape* supplement to flesh out your town environment.

Eberron: For variety, set this in Dragonroost in Zilargo, and make everyone gnomes. Or to be even crazier, set it in Grellreach in Darguun and make everyone into hobgoblins.

Generic: A town with a lord mayor that the PCs have never been to is what you need. If they have been there, then you have to explain how the mayor's daughter's disposition changed.

d20 Modern: Las Vegas, baby. It has to be. You can use humans, or bring in some shadow creatures and have the story unfold in a small, segregated community of weird creatures.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

Steal This Hook!

Stealing the Crown Jewels

By Robert Wiese

Scoundrels are not always thieves, but thieves are usually always scoundrels. Whether they are the elite cat burglars that steal high-end valuables or the second-story men and women who steal whatever they can carry, or the footpads that hold up people in alleys, thieves hold a somewhat romantic place in cultural thought. Like pirates, they don't deserve it. This month, we hook your PCs into adventures involving thieves and thefts.

Bring Me Pretties, My Minions -- *Eberron*

Fairhaven, the capital of Aundair, is one of the most active and cosmopolitan cities in all of Khorvaire. Only Sharn and a few others rival it. In this massive metropolis, almost anything can happen. With a thriving underworld, the royal government of Aundair, a university on the rebound, dragonmarked enclaves, and merchant powers, the possibilities are endless.

One day, when the PCs are meeting with a business contact, authorities come to arrest the business contact for theft. The business contact claims innocence and can provide an alibi (that cannot be confirmed). Inquiry under a *zone of truth* spell shows that the accused really remembers being somewhere else at the time of the theft. An eyewitness, however, places the accused at the scene of the crime at the time of the theft. The accused believes he (or she) is being framed and railroaded for some business reason, and asks for help.

d100 Motivations

01-40 The business contact is sincere and needs help, and he or she hides nothing from the PCs.

41-90 The business contact made the Will save against the *modify memory* (if that complication is used), and remembers what happened (and made the save for the *zone of truth*, too). The business contact is afraid to say anything for fear of being killed, and it takes a lot of convincing or magical probing to reveal what this person knows.

91-00 The business contact is the bard mastermind behind the crimes, and he or she is allaying any future suspicion by setting

Campaign Adaptation

Enchanters exist in any **D&D** campaign world, so this hook works in any campaign. **Complete Adventurer** may help you flesh out the bard, and *Spell Compendium* can give you new and cool spell options.

Forgotten Realms: This seems very much like a Thayan plot, so you could set it somewhere near a Thayan enclave and have the mastermind be part of the enclave.

himself or herself up as a victim.

d100 Complications

00-45 The mastermind behind the crimes is a bard enchanter who uses *dominate person* to have other innocents commit thefts that would be easy for them, and then uses *modify memory* to remove the memory of the crime and substitute another.

46-60 This is not the first crime, and other "minions" with modified memories live in the cities. The PCs have to find some of them to piece together enough information to find the mastermind.

Generic: Hey, this one goes anywhere there are people with magic.

d20 Modern: In a **d20 Modern** setting, this might be more fun in a less populated are such as a large town in the American Midwest. It would also work well on a frontier space station around some distant planet in a **d20 Future** campaign.

61-65 The mastermind bard is a friend of the PCs -- perhaps a contact from a past adventure. He or she has been very helpful to them, such that they would be unwilling to believe the bard could be behind the crimes.

66-75 The bard is being controlled or forced by another person or creature (perhaps a vampire or the ghost of a relative) to have these crimes committed. If the bard is eliminated, the crimes stop only for a short time while the real mastermind finds another pawn.

76-90 The crimes are being perpetrated by doppelgangers or changelings, and the business contact really was not at the crime scene. Proving that could be very difficult seeing as he or she cannot prove the alibi.

91-00 The whole crime spree is a ruse to draw in the PCs. The bard mastermind is a pleasure devil in disguise and wants to corrupt the PC cleric. Devils committed the thefts, and they designed every step of the investigation to lead the PC cleric or paladin down a path of spiritual corruption.

Quick, Duck in Here -- *Eberron*

Sharn, the City of Towers, is more than it appears in many ways. Layer upon layer of the city reach from the shores of the Dagger River up to the skies above the thousand-foot cliffs against which the city rests. In addition, magical rooms exist within towers, and more than one wizard (or powerful person with a wizard henchperson) maintains a more or less permanent *magnificent mansion* (known in Greyhawk as a *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*) with access to walkways or gardens in the better parts of the city.

Morgrave University received a unique package from a group of commissioned explorers the night before last via House Orien fast transport means. The next night, as the PCs leave a tavern or other such nighttime entertainment business, they see a group of people running through the streets carrying something covered in a tarp. It looks large and heavy. They run up (or down) two levels and then into a garden, and stop in the middle of a walkway. One of them makes some gestures and a faint shimmer appears in the air (visible in the light of a *continual flame* sculpture nearby). The people all run through the shimmer and disappear. So does the shimmer. Seconds later, cries of "Thief!!" ring out across the city, and booted footsteps move toward the garden (actually, they go everywhere).

d100 Motivations

00-60 Morgrave University is horrified and upset at the loss of the

artifact. They want it back and provide all the help they can.

61-85 Scholars at Morgrave determined that the artifact has magical powers that no one should know about, and they are very cagey about what the artifact is, where it came from, or what it does. They do want it back, though.

86-95 One of the scholars at Morgrave University arranged the theft and is connected to the owner of the *magnificent mansion* where the thieves hid.

96-00 The artifact carries a curse, and a demon or devil has replaced one of the scholars working on the device. That demon wants the artifact because it can help release demons from Khyber. It could be a fiend possessing a scholar or a fiend that has killed and impersonated a scholar.

d100 Complications

00-25 The owner of the *magnificent mansion* is behind the theft, and she has allowed the thieves access to it. The thieves actually plan to form a great guild of thieves that use the *mansion* as a base (woe to them if someone dispels it).

26-55 The master thief used Use Magic Device to activate someone else's *magnificent mansion*, effectively stealing the *mansion* too. The *mansion* within is large enough that the thieves and the real owners don't run into each other (indeed, the real owner is rarely there).

56-70 The artifact is stored in the *mansion*, and the creator cannot be found, so the PCs have to break into the *magnificent mansion* to recover the artifact.

71-90 The *mansion* has a flaw: a rift into another plane. Monsters from that plane are getting into the *mansion* and will find their way into the city soon enough. The theft is not the only problem the PCs face.

91-00 The *magnificent mansion* has an unusual trait: It opens into some odd places and includes an exit to the world of Greyhawk.

Campaign Adaptation

You could choose to design a mansion that connects different campaign worlds. Thus, the thieves could be operating on different campaign worlds at the same time, and pursuers from the Forgotten Realms could be looking for a different valuable than those on Eberron. *Cityscape* may help flesh out the world outside the magnificent mansion, and *Dungeonscape* (due out in February) could really help you create the internal world of the mansion. Don't forget the servants.

Forgotten Realms: Waterdeep, Athkatla in Amn, anywhere in Thay, or Skuld in Mulhorand are good locations for this adventure.

Generic: Large trading centers are the most likely locations for this adventure, but powerful wizards that like to show off their magic are also needed to create the *magnificent mansion* (plus any tweaks to the effect you wish to introduce). Pick a large city where wizards live. You probably have one.

d20 Modern: The *magnificent mansion* is a magical construction unheard-of in the **d20 Modern** setting, where no one can cast the spell required to make one. Thus, there must be a wizard from a fantasy world involved -- one who knows spells beyond what normal magic in **d20 Modern** allows. Such a person could live anywhere, but probably lives in London, New York, or Shanghai, where he or she can get "lost in the crowd."

Hands in the Cookie Jar -- *Forgotten Realms*

Suzail, capital of Cormyr, is one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in the entire Realms, and it serves as the home of Cormyrean royalty. As one

might expect, it is also the home (sometimes, anyway) of the crown jewels. Most kings have crown jewels, after all. They are a mark of status. They are also well guarded. However, in a world that includes both innovative criminals and magic, no security is good enough.

One morning, rumors begin to circulate that the crown jewels are missing. No one knows anything, but everyone is willing to speculate and make up things that sound good. Later in the morning, and over the next several days, people begin asking questions. Not all of these people wear the uniforms of law enforcement. Everyone feels the heat, including the PCs, who are in town between adventures. Eventually, someone is arrested. That is when the adventure hits home for the PCs.

d100 Motivations

00-30 The royal family wants the jewels back as quickly as possible, and they don't care what happens to the thieves. This could lead to quick "vigilante" justice or to the thieves being able to work a deal.

31-50 The royal family wants vengeance on the thieves more than they want the jewels back. They can always replace jewels, but they must show the world that they won't tolerate thieves.

51-75 A member of the royal family is behind the thefts in some way, and he wants the crime blamed on scapegoats so that the questions die down and the jewels are not recovered.

76-00 Rivals of the royal family want to use the theft as a destabilizing incident, though that is difficult with the popular family of late King Azoun IV. Nonetheless, these rivals try to make an incident of it.

d100 Complications

00-40 The PCs are the ones arrested, or some of the more roguish ones are taken into custody. The PCs are innocent, but the real thieves planted enough evidence to lay the blame on "foreigner adventurers." The PCs not arrested have to solve the case.

41-55 The PCs really did commit the crime. You may have to give them a motivation for doing so that fits their morals, and then

Campaign Adaptation

This kind of adventure can take place anywhere there are crown jewels to be stolen. You could take advantage of the material in *Cityscape*, but then again you might want to use *Races of the Wild*, *Races of Stone*, or some world-specific publication instead.

Eberron: Since all of the Five Nations are ruled by descendents of the Galifar kings, all are royalty and would have crown jewels somewhere. Pick your favorite among the Five Nations. I like Thrane and Aundair.

Generic: You need a country with some crown jewels, though the rulers don't have to be royalty. A merchant ruler without a title could have crown jewels of some kind too. A large city setting is ideal for this adventure -- usually the largest in the campaign region works best.

d20 Modern: Of course London is the most obvious choice for this adventure. Where else has so much been told about the Crown Jewels? Heck, there was an episode of the old Batman TV series that

again you may not. In either case, have the adventure start with the theft and proceed to the investigation. The PCs may have to turn themselves in, or lay the blame on someone else, or just leave town and not come back. If this won't work with your group of player characters, feel free to try another result.

had the Crown Jewels as the main target of the villains.

56-85 Someone on the shady side of the law thinks the PCs are involved and begins pressuring them (in classic film style; see *The Maltese Falcon* for ideas) to turn the jewels over. Whether the PCs have the jewels or not is not relevant.

86-00 The theft was the "final exam" of some thieves from Night Masks from Westgate who are under new leadership. As part of their disguise, they magically took on the appearances of one or more of the PCs, having determined that the PCs are "traveling through" and therefore likely to be gone soon.

About the Author

Robert Wiese Robert Wiese has been playing **D&D** since 1978 after he watched a game played in the car on the way home from a Boy Scouts meeting. He was fascinated, and delved into this strange world of dragons and magic and sourcebooks. Years later, he was hired to edit tournaments for the **RPGA** Network, and from there progressed to running the network after his boss was assassinated in the great Christmas purge of 1996. Times were tough, but he persevered and brought the **RPGA** into a shining new era. Eventually he met a girl who liked to play **D&D** too, and he left Renton for the warmth and casinos of Reno, Nevada. Now, he works in the Pharmacology department of UNR studying mouse foot muscles and the effects of RF emissions on same. He spends as much time as possible with his wife Rhonda and year-old son Owen.

Over the course of his career, he wrote over sixty tournament adventures for the **RPGA**, and he continues to inflict his creativity on you through this website. He hopes that you find his little creations useful, or at least amusing.

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Steal This Hook!

Dungeon Dangers

By Robert Wiese

The dungeon, that archetypical setting for **D&D** adventures and part of the game's name, has always been full of possibilities for fantastic wealth and also for gruesome death. Unlike our world, people in **D&D** campaign worlds construct tombs and dungeons all the time, and they load them with loot and monsters. Usually, the mere existence of a dungeon is reason enough to try to loot it. This month, however, consider some reasons to get the PCs into the dungeon other than the really obvious, "Hey, there's a dungeon under that mountain over there."

The new *Dungeonscape* supplement should be really useful in making and fleshing out dungeons for your PCs. In addition, you might find any of the following helpful depending on the dungeon's occupants: *Races of Stone*, *Lords of Madness*, *Libris Mortis*, *Sandstorm*, and even *Savage Species* (be sure to have multiheaded creatures, and tell your players I sent them). This is just a short list of recommended books; just about anything published for **Dungeons & Dragons** can be used in a dungeon somehow.

Dungeons go almost anywhere in any campaign setting, even under cities (as in the upcoming *Expedition to the Ruins of Greyhawk* super-adventure). This is true even in the **d20 Modern** world. Pick a place in your campaign world and stick a dungeon there. That's what everyone else does.

"We're Lost, Aren't We?"

"I wonder if anyone has missed us yet."

"I doubt it. This is supposed to be a big dungeon, and it should take a lot of time to explore. And they think we're competent."

"I thought so, too, but now there are only two of us and we're trapped in this room with who knows what waiting to eat us if we try to leave. Your spells keep us alive, but we won't last much

longer."

"True. . . . Maybe it's time to call my cousin." With that, the cleric begins to cast a *sending* spell.

d100 Motivations

00-25 The sender really is a cousin of the PC, and he really needs rescuing.

26-60 The sender really needs rescuing, but is not a cousin of the PC. However, the sender claims that relationship to have one up on his friends, since the PC has a certain amount of fame.

61-90 The sender is not a cousin of the PCs (you just have to know the person to cast a *sending*, and even villains can meet that requirement). The whole episode is a trap; a villain infiltrated the missing group of adventurers and lured them to their apparent deaths, all for the purpose of luring the PCs to the dungeon. He plans something underhanded for the PCs in the dungeon.

91-00 The sending is actually a vision from a PC's deity. The sender in the dialog doesn't reach anyone, but the sender's deity is the same as that of the PC, and the deity is trying to send help.

d100 Complications

00-50 Unfortunately, the sending misidentified a monster or two, so the PCs may prepare for the wrong monster.

51-80 The sending did not mention the blue dragon living outside the dungeon that killed two of the missing adventurers before they even saw a corridor. [If you have high-level PCs, you could use the Gargantuan blue dragon figure from the *D&D Icons* miniature line.]

81-00 The missing adventurers are all alive; they have been captured and mentally dominated by some dweller in the dungeon, such as a mind flayer. The PCs have to fight the people they are trying to rescue.

Alternative Loot

Dungeons are usually stocked with treasure and magic items, and these are usually the possessions of the occupants (since few people create huge treasure hoard dungeons). But, there could be other things too. Dungeons open up a lot of possibilities for rewards.

1. The dungeon itself could be a reward. After all, if you clear it, you own it.

2. The creatures in the dungeon can be a reward, especially for evil PCs with the Leadership feat. Having hench-creatures is very useful in later adventures. Also, the PCs may find defenseless offspring that they can train or sell.

The stuff in the dungeon can be a reward, and I am not talking about loot here. If the PCs come across a good door with a good lock, they could take it down and sell it in town. Same goes for trap mechanisms, sculptures (even if part of the wall or floor), tapestries, whatever. It may be that a former adventurer remembers a specific dungeon trapping and wishes to use it for her abode, so she may offer the group a reward for retrieving it.

So spend some creativity on rewards as well as traps and monsters when you make dungeons. Adventurers, and players too, like rewards commensurate with the risk they undertake to get those rewards.

A Little Illicit Delving

"Say, did you hear about that tomb they found yesterday?" whispers a sly and furtive-looking human. He is seated with three other humans, all equally furtive-looking. The group sits near you, trying to be quiet but not succeeding.

"I heard, and I don't like it," responds one of the others -- a woman. "This place is so old, we have to be sitting on a pile of tombs. Luckily for us, none have been found . . . until now."

"I heard the king put it all under wraps immediately, so there wouldn't be packs of looters down there," says the first man. "Makes me wonder what he knows, to be honest. I mean, how does he know there's anything in it. Magic? I'd sure like to know."

"Well, it seems you won't get the chance," replies the third, a boy of perhaps sixteen years. "Besides, if there's anything good in it, there's bound to be golems or walking dead guarding it. The occupant might even be something nasty, like a vampire. It'd take someone better 'n us to get into there, assuming anyone was allowed in."

"I was thinking," responds the first," that the guards can't be that bad to sneak past, and early access to the tomb would be the sure way to reap its rewards. But if you're right about what's inside, forget it. That's a prize that could be too pricey for me." The four begin to talk of other things and drink copiously.

d100 Motivations

00-55 There is a tomb. Some construction personnel found it while digging to build a new structure for a local notable. The local ruler has barred anyone from entering it and has kept the whole existence of it as hush-hush as possible.

56-80 There is a tomb, but the four thieves have been sent to lure the PCs into exploring it (and thus either bringing about their deaths or sealing them inside). They know just where they put their table when they started talking. There is no barrier to entry into the tomb.

81-00 Competing factions within the government know about the tomb, and each faction thinks it knows who is buried there. Each faction wants to control the tomb and its riches. Some try to hire the PCs, some hire people who work against the PCs.

d100 Complications

00-25 The main complication is that the tomb is filled with traps and guardians. The PCs could find rewards, too, but those rewards don't come to the PCs easily.

26-55 There are traps and guardians, but no direct rewards. Instead, the main tomb chamber shows a huge magica map of the world and the locations of a number of dragon hoards. Since the map is magical, the locations are updated as the hoards move, and the locations disappear if the hoards are taken by looters or

otherwise dispersed.

56-80 Factions working to get the rewards for themselves enter the tomb after the PCs, and these latecomers attack the PCs after monsters or traps weaken them. The other looters hope to use the PCs to fight all the guardians and trigger all the traps, then kill the PCs and take the loot.

81-00 There is no tomb at all. The apparent entry is a planar gate, which has been dormant for centuries. Creatures on the other side, however, still wait for it to reopen.

The Mysterious Madam

A famous and opulent resort town that caters to wealthy merchants, leaders, and even adventurers with enough cash nestles next to a beautiful lake. But, strip all that away, and it is still a city where people live, work, and die. About a hundred years ago, one of the city's most influential citizens died of mysterious causes. This woman, Bessiyra, operated the most famous bath and gambling complex in the resort. Someone whisked her body away secretly before any investigation could be done, and supposedly buried it in an underground tomb complex some thirty miles east of the city and north of the lake. She had a reputation as a powerful wizard and former adventurer who settled there and started her business with her adventuring gold. Several powerful magic items, and all her records and journals, disappeared at the same time.

For years, tomb raiders, looters, and adventurers tried to find this tomb, to no avail. They did find something at the site: a warren of tunnels that surrounded something like a net entraps its prey. However, these people found no way to penetrate to the center. Eventually, word spread that the center area was empty and the whole "tomb area" was a false tomb designed to prevent people from finding Bessiyra's real tomb.

Recently, however, something changed. A group of tomb raiders returned from the warren area so badly injured that it was thought they would all die. One (or perhaps two) survived, and since recovering the survivor(s) spends time in taverns getting drunk. Although he is clearly unhinged, he has been babbling about finding a secret door into the tomb of Bessiyra. Most people don't pay attention, but some do. One of those people hires the PCs to investigate. This patron offers to share the treasure (if any) somewhat evenly, as a crew on a pirate ship would (the patron is the captain who gets a double share).

d100 Motivations

00-50 The patron is interested in the tomb, but not for the reason that the PCs think. Bessiyra had some information on the patron's family, and the patron would like to know if it was buried with her or not. If so, the patron would like it to disappear. The patron doesn't care much about the wealth, but puts on a show of caring.

51-70 Several patrons compete for the services of the PCs, who are probably famous as adventurers. The last group to go there was too weak; these patrons think that more powerful adventurers can overcome whatever drove the one survivor mad.

71-85 One of Bessiyra's descendents wants to hire the PCs to help move the body, and then bring conflicting or

false reports so that the tomb remains undisturbed.

86-00 The tomb is not the interesting part of the story; the interesting part involves the people who stole the body and put it in the tomb.

d100 Complications

00-40 The real tomb is a trap-filled maze guarded by golems and other constructs. In addition, some of the traps trigger summoning spells that bring live defenders.

41-50 No documents are in the tomb; someone took them elsewhere or destroyed them.

51-65 The secret door leads to yet another false tomb that is filled with traps and has the reputed magic items stored in it. Bessiyra has become a lich and has a base elsewhere. This tomb is merely a storage area now.

66-90 The tomb is lined with lead, plus barriers within its structure to prevent teleporting and planar travel into or out of it.

91-95 The real tomb is a small travelers' shrine on the road some five miles away. Bessiyra and her magic items and documents are buried beneath the shrine.

96-00 Bessiyra's body was buried in someone else's tomb because her true monstrous nature was something that certain associates did not want revealed when she died. They maintain the apparent tomb to keep the "myth" of Bessiyra alive.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

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Steal This Hook!

"Let's Make a Deal"

By Robert Wiese

"You wash my back, I'll wash yours." It's very cliché, but also very true. Bad guys, especially, like to form alliances to accomplish common or related goals. These are usually short-term alliances, or they may be merely economic arrangements, but they bolster both sides because each can throw the other group against pesky adventurers. This month, consider these hooks that involve different groups either forming alliances or offering their services for such an alliance.

"Dragon Turtle, for Barter Only" -- *Eberron*

In the far east of Khorvaire, the Lhazaar princes control the seas. Their ships patrol the waters, fighting independent pirates (for all Lhazaar princes descend somehow from pirates, either biologically or ideologically) and protecting their lands from incursions. However, groups in the Lhazaar islands seek to overthrow one or another prince. Sometimes these forces can be traced to other princes, sometimes to humanoids from Q'Barra or Valenar, and sometimes to independent pirates and smugglers that find the current status quo not favorable.

The PCs are on a ship traveling somewhere in the southern Lhazaar Principalities when they see a strange sight. Several dragon turtles approach the ship. Since dragon turtles are dragons, the captain does not want to initiate hostilities, and his delay is very costly. The dragon turtles ram the ship, and dozens of lizardfolk warriors stream from hidden places in the shells and board the ship. The PCs are quickly fighting for their lives!

Should they survive, the ship probably won't. Once they have figured out rescue, the owners of the ship contact them and ask them to do something about the lizardfolk mercenaries. They have attacked other ships while the PCs were busy rescuing themselves.

d100 Motivations

00-45 The ship owner, part of a faction in the Lhazaar Principalities, is sincere in wanting the lizardfolk stopped. He doesn't know anything besides the names of the captains of the other ships attacked and that these captains all belonged to part of the same faction.

Campaign Adaptation

Bring this hook into your campaign. The **Forgotten Realms** product *Serpent Kingdoms* details the lives of lizardfolk in good detail. You might want to use blackscale or poison dusk lizardfolk from *Monster Manual III* instead of the standard variety. And *Stormwrack* should help with the sea-going parts of the adventure.

Forgotten Realms: You could put this adventure in and around the Shining Sea, with the lizardfolk coming from the Jungles of Chult.

Generic: A coastal area with several communities that could be at odds is what you need. It should have a place somewhere close where lizardfolk would live, but close is relative.

46-75 The lizardfolk were not supposed to attack the ship, since the ships owner is the one paying the lizardfolk to attack others. He has decided they are unreliable and wants the PCs to eliminate them (and thus destroy evidence of his activities).

76-90 A rival of the ship owner, possibly the prince, contacts the PCs too. This person wants the PCs to go against the ship owner and negotiate a pact with the lizardfolk.

91-00 The lizardfolk are looking long-term, and they want to overthrow a Lhazaar prince and claim his lands for their own. The current tactics are the beginnings of a years-long plot.

d100 Complications

00-65 A large tribe of lizardfolk from Q'Barra sees an opportunity in the endless conflicts, and they domesticated some dragon turtles that live in the seas near their homelands. They sell their services to any who can pay, and they are currently working for an independent pirate group that wants to cause chaos in the southern Principalities.

Greyhawk: This adventure works in the Sea of Gearnat and Relmor Bay, with the lizardfolk coming down from the Gnatmarsh.

Modern: Dragon turtles are pretty rare in the modern world, but you could give the lizardfolk submarines that look like dragon turtles. Place the adventure off the coast of Japan and Australia, or near Seattle.

Ravenloft: The dragon turtles become skeletal dragon turtles or even dragon turtle dracoliches, and the lizardfolk could be mummified or vampiric. Set the adventure along the coast of Lamordia or Dementlieu (though I favor Lamordia).

66-75 The tamed dragon turtles have infected wild ones with the desire to attack ships, and additional ships are being attacked by dragon turtles alone. Sorting out which ships are victims of the lizardfolk could be problematic.

76-85 Two Lhazaar princes have both paid the lizardfolk, which results in the lizardfolk working against both princes (something they have no problem with).

86-00 The real power behind the lizardfolk is a pirate who is wanted for many crimes and would be killed if apprehended. This pirate is taking revenge on the princes, and she uses the lizardfolk as one means to that end.

Barge Hags -- *Forgotten Realms*

The river Delimbiyr runs from the Nether Mountains south and west past the High Forest, the High Moor, and Daggerford to reach the Sword Coast. Though the Shining Falls near Loudwater prevent the whole length of it from being navigable, it is navigable from Loudwater to the coast and from above the falls to the headwaters. Thus, there is a lot of trade on the water, especially from Loudwater to the sea. River transport of goods is preferable from Loudwater, both because it's less expensive and because bandits haunt the road. However, the river has its share of dangers. Barge pirates operate from time to time below Loudwater, where they can hide in the High Moor between raids. Barge pirates are not usually a big problem; they strike once or twice and then disappear for some reason.

Then, reports come in to Secomber and Loudwater of a new group of pirates that don't steal goods. Instead, they blockade the river and demand tolls to pass. As the days pass, both towns send out forces to eliminate these pirates, but these pirates seem to have magic (or luck, or good planning) on their side because the weather is always in their favor. Some are captured or killed, but the group is not stopped and barge/boat captains pay the tolls to move their vessels.

In Secomber, a merchant named Sultai Orero has suffered too much loss to these new barge pirates, and she wants something done about it. Since the pirates are somehow evading the authorities on a regular basis, she thinks the authorities are not to be trusted and turns to adventurers. She is willing to offer a handsome reward -- and even a partnership with PCs who have a business inclination.

d100 Motivations

00-55 Sultai is genuinely concerned about her business and is up front with the PCs.

56-80 Sultai is not hiring the PCs at all. One of the hags (see below) impersonates her via magic and hires the PCs. The hags want to be rid of their "partners" and think this is the best way of severing the relationship.

81-00 Sultai wants revenge. She tried to make a deal with the pirates, but they refused, so she wants them eliminated. Her business is of secondary concern.

d100 Complications

00-30 The barge pirates don't have a wizard among them. They have made a deal with a hag covey that lives in the High Moor, and the hags provide weather control support, along with other spell support and even physical intervention, in exchange for half the proceeds. The hags use the money for some project that is not related to the barge pirates, and would find other ways of stealing the money if the barge pirates are eliminated.

31-50 The hags are not real. Instead, they are the creation of a group of evil fey that lives in the High Moor. By this subterfuge, the fey protect themselves from discovery should the pirates be

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for other campaign worlds. *Complete Scoundrel* and *Complete Adventurer* might be useful in rounding out the pirates. *Stormwrack* might help with the waterborne part of the adventure.

Eberron: This adventure would work well on the river border between Thrane and Karrnath, just north of Thronehold. If that's a little too close to civilization for you, move north to the border between Aundair and Karrnath.

Generic: A waterway that is used for trade is the main requirement. You don't even need a swamp nearby, since you can have the hags living almost anywhere.

Greyhawk: The area north of Greyhawk City works well, as does the river that runs between Verbobonc and Dyvers.

Modern: Not all three kinds of hags appear in the modern world unless they are shadow creatures brought from somewhere else. But you can replace them with fey or medusa spellcasters. This adventure could be interesting along the Mississippi, but also along the Yangtze or the Nile or the Amazon.

captured.

51-75 A rival of Sultai's is taking advantage of the situation and having his captains pay the pirates to charge Sultai's vessels (or those carrying her cargoes) more. This rival hopes to drive her out of business without being personally involved.

Ravenloft: The Musarde River in Richemulot is a good place for this adventure. It connects all the settlements of the domain, and the people in charge are all merchants.

76-00 Vessels that pay the pirates are still being attacked and destroyed from time to time. The hags use illusions, undead, and even river creatures to destroy boats that have cargoes they want.

My Bugbear, My Friend -- *Eberron*

In Zilargo, near the Seawall Mountains, a lot of people move from place to place. A lightning rail line passes through the area, and House Orien trade roads connect the major gnomish settlements. In this area, from time to time, bandits operate. The trade caravans are well guarded, so travelers become the prime targets. One group of gnome bandits, called the Bloody Hawks, robs travelers throughout the region between Zolanberg and Korranberg. They usually rob on the trade roads, but they have hit the lightning rail line more than once. They never kill; always masked, they take valuables and leave their group's symbol behind.

A week ago, a group of traveling merchants was slaughtered on the road between Tarandro and Thurimbar, and all their possessions taken. A Bloody Hawks sign was left at the scene. This caused the regional law enforcement agencies, who usually did not take much interest in the doings of the Bloody Hawks, to become more interested and to try to seek them out. Two days ago, another attack occurred, this time outside Zolanberg. There was one survivor, and he saw bugbears and gnomes working together to slaughter everyone else. Again, a Bloody Hawks sign was left at the scene.

The PCs are in one of the towns in the region when they hear that Captain Osamonish of the guards seeks adventurers. Captain Osamonish relates that he lost his entire company to the bugbear and gnome bandits, and he needs help to track and eliminate them. He offers standard pay, but says that the bandits no doubt have a lot of loot, and if some of that was not returned it could be explained away easily.

d100 Motivations

00-45 Captain Osamonish is sincere; he lost his company and wants a victory so their lives were not given in vain.

46-55 Captain Osamonish tried to make a deal with the bandits to cut the watch company in for a percentage, but the bugbears among the bandits wanted no more allies and attacked. Now the captain wants revenge.

56-80 As an alternative, the PCs are traveling the road when they are attacked by an overwhelming force of bandits and left for dead. A bugbear from a different tribe brings them back and gives them information that puts them on the track of the bandits (to get their stuff back, among other reasons).

81-00 The Bloody Hawks are not working with the bugbears (or aren't any more, depending on the complication below). The bugbears are using the sign to divert blame away from themselves. The Bloody Hawks want the bugbears stopped (to clear their reputations) and so they hire the PCs.

d100 Complications

00-40 The Bloody Hawks allied with a tribe of bugbears from the Seawall Mountains for mutual profit (or to keep themselves from being killed by the bugbears). The bugbears are doing the murders, which have the gnomes worried.

41-50 The bugbears are merely using the sign of the Bloody Hawks to divert suspicion onto someone else for their raids. The bugbears are led by a gnome sorcerer or maybe a necromancer.

51-65 The third caravan (the next one) is attacked by owlbears instead of bandits. The clues don't match up at all, and the PCs have to figure out what is going on.

66-90 Some of the bodies from the attack sites were stolen, including most of the lost company of guards. The lost patrol returns as zombies or ghouls and attacks the next caravan with the Hawks. Other bodies appear later on, or they appear guarding a base that the bugbears and/or Hawks are using.

91-00 The lost company of guards is the Bloody Hawks. They were using their official status to commit the robberies. They ran afoul of the bugbears when they tried to stop the use of their sign.

Campaign Adaptation

This hook drops easily into other campaign worlds. Here are some suggestions. Use *Savage Species* to make interesting types of bugbears (feral, insectile, reptilian, multiheaded, and even yuan-ti crossbreed variants). *Complete Scoundrel* could have a lot to help you flesh out the bandits.

Forgotten Realms: The Dalelands are a good place for this adventure, with bugbears living in the Thunder Peaks or the forest of Cormanthor.

Generic: All you need for this is a city or town and a road that goes somewhere else that people use frequently. Some wilderness where bandits can hide is also helpful.

Greyhawk: This adventure works in the Duchy of Urnst, or even the County. There are a lot of merchants and people going here and there, and a kind of city-state mentality.

Modern: Put the bugbears in SUVs or on motorcycles and you have something reminiscent of *Mad Max* (or maybe *The Road Warrior*). Set the adventure in Australia, where the frontier is not far away but there are towns.

Ravenloft: The bandits and bugbears would be desperate characters in the Domain of Dread. You could even make them lycanthropes. Dementlieu and Invidia are good domain choices, though Falkovnia works too.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

Hooks for Evil Characters

By Robert Wiese

The hooks you normally read in this column assume that the adventurers are good-aligned, or at least good-intentioned, and that the resultant adventure will have them doing something heroic. But, there are those of you out there that like to play in, or run, campaigns where the PCs are evil. What should you do with them? *Steal This Hook* comes to the rescue this month, with hooks targeted for evil PCs. They are hooks that could have been targeted at good PCs, too, and you can in general twist any of the hooks in any "issue" of this column toward evil PCs if you want.

Author's Disclaimer: The author does not recommend playing evil PCs, nor does he condone evil behavior in real life or in the game.

"That Darn Familiar" -- *Eberron*

It has been known to happen at times, and it usually makes for lighthearted copy in the back pages of the *Sharn Inquisitive*: a wealthy maven dies, and instead of leaving her estate to friends, family, or public trusts, she chooses to will everything to a beloved pet.

Recently, it has happened again. Caroline Blackcatter, minor sorcerer and heiress to a family business manufacturing rare spell components, passed away at the venerable age of 92. According to executors, the entirety of her fortune went to her familiar, Mister Pipkins, including substantial funding set aside for the cat's care and protection.

While arousing smirks and smiles from *Sharn Inquisitive* readers, not everyone is so enamored with the story.

One of the provisions of the will is that if should anything befall Mister Pipkins, the fortune will pass on to Bartlemeus Burrlacher, chief executor of the estate. Naturally, Burrlacher cannot be associated with any attempt to do away with the cat . . . however, furtive associates of his approach the party, suggesting the cat's death would greatly benefit them all. Through the most transparent implications, they make it clear that Burrlacher needs a discreet, professional -- and unaffiliated -- party to break into the Blackcatter estate, where they must locate and assassinate Mister Pipkins. Once the Blackcatter fortune passes to Burrlacher, the party will be handsomely paid; in addition, should they stage their assassination attempt as a burglary, any objects they secure along the way are theirs to keep.

d100 Motivations

00-40 Burrlacher is what he says: a greedy man in need of one less cat, in order to gain possession of the fortune he has managed for years.

41-75 Burrlacher is still working for the estate; the fortune will not pass to him if the cat dies, but rather to a distant relative. Only if the cat lives long enough to die at a ripe old age of natural causes will Burrlacher be rewarded. Thus, he hires the party to test the estate's defenses and guards. He'll be waiting in the final study along with the cat -- and a heavy contingency of guards -- to reveal himself to the PCs and escort them out.

76-00 Caroline Blackcatter did not actually pass away. She has taken the guise of her cat to see which of her staff she can really trust, before completing her actual will. She'll reveal herself to the PCs when necessary and solicit the name of their employer. If things turn heated, she will certainly defend herself.

d100 Complications

00-60 The Blackcatter estate is by no means ill-defended. From topiary guardians in the gardens, to zealous bodyguards, to the cat itself -- well-protected by a nigh-impenetrable arsenal of defensive spells (this is truly a cat that could walk through walls) -- this is not an easy contract to fulfill.

61-90 Further protecting the cat, a number of local police have infiltrated the estate, posing as bodyguards. Due to the provisions of the will (if the provisions do indeed benefit Burrlacher), they've suspected Burrlacher would send assassins against the cat, which they've vowed to thwart.

91-00 The familiar, as it turns out, is no mere cat (if the third motivation above isn't used). Rather, it's a rakshasa that stays in the guise of a familiar in order to work incognito. The rakshasa has managed the estate for years, using Caroline Blackcatter for cover, and it composed her will itself. Needless to say, now that it has come directly into her fortune, it has no intention of seeing it taken away -- or its identity revealed.

"I Want One of Those" -- *Forgotten Realms*

Amn is an ancient land and home to a great many wizards. Each is trying to outdo his or her fellows in power or uniqueness of new items or any other measure that they can think of. In Murann, on the coast, one of the wizards has made a true advancement in the construction of golems. This wizard, Chayosa Tuwese, has created a golem with some real intelligence, and yet with the usual immunities to mental effects. She guards this secret closely and has created only a few of these new golems to guard her tower.

No matter how closely one guards a secret, someone else finds out. In this case, a rival mystic theurge has found out about the new golems. This man, Blaseus Eldmelm, knows that Chayosa has made something really powerful but he doesn't know the properties of the new creature. He'd like to, so he seeks out some suitable mercenaries/thieves/adventurers to break into Chayosa's tower and steal one of the golems, intact and functioning. In return for the golem, Blaseus is willing to offer access to magical training (spells and feats) that the PCs don't normally have access to. For those not of a magical bent, he can arrange through contacts for other kinds of training. He can also offer a map to a supposed treasure that he never got around to following up on when he was an adventurer.

d100 Motivations

00-30 Blaseus is sincere in what he says. He does not say what he wants to do with the golem, because it's not really the PCs' business anyway.

31-50 Blaseus is actually an employee of Chayosa, who wants someone to try to break into her house so she can see how well her new golems function. She plans to kill the intruding PCs.

51-75 Chayosa wants to fake her own death, and what better way than at the hands of mercenaries? She leaked the information about the golems, knowing Blaseus would find it irresistible.

76-00 Blaseus plans to kill the PCs rather than pay them, but he gives them enough real information to get them into trouble (and then enough false information that they cannot get out). The whole golem thing is a ruse; Blaseus has a lasting grudge against the PCs.

d100 Complications

00-40 Someone else has hired adventurers or thieves for the same purpose (stealing a golem), and the PCs encounter their rivals in the tower. The rivals are hostile to the PCs initially.

41-55 Chayosa is dead, slain by her new creations. Now they wander the tower at random, killing anything that moves.

56-75 Chayosa's new golems are created in such a way that the animating spirit comes from a human instead of an elemental or wherever. Thus, the golems have some intelligence and cunning, and yet they retain their mental immunities. The golems use weapons and tactics.

76-00 Blaseus has alerted the local law enforcement to the PCs' plans, in case they make it out alive. Law enforcement officers will be waiting for the PCs upon their departure.

Campaign Adaptation

This hook works in other campaigns where lots of wizards live. You might find *Complete Arcane* and/or*Complete Mage* useful for fleshing out wizards for the adventure. *Cityscape* could give you a good setting (if you need to make up a city for this), and *Dungeonscape* could help with the house that the PCs have to break into.

Eberron: Try this adventure in Atur, the City of Night, in Karrnath. Normally a focus of undead collection, the construct aspect could be a nice diversion from the drudgery of corpses.

Generic: Okay, absolutely anywhere works for this adventure. Even towers alone in the wilderness. All you need is a mage's tower, a mage (living or dead), and someone who knows about it.

Greyhawk: The wizards of the Great Kingdom would not only engage in this kind of research, but hire evil PCs regularly. Set it anywhere east of the Duchy of Urnst and you're golden.

Modern: For some irony, set this adventure in Ingolstadt, Germany, where Frankenstein created his monster.

"I had that around here somewhere . . ." -- *Eberron*

Arcanix, on the shores of Lake Galifar in Aundair, is a center for arcane studies that attracts dozens of apprentices each year and more than a few wizardly residents. Some live in the floating towers of the Arcane Congress, but many live in the village (on the ground) and try to benefit from being near the Arcane Congress. Because of this concentration of magical knowledge, and students thereof, rare magical happenings are not paid much attention to.

Yesterday, a wizard named Rasamiri Nyss, who has a reputation for absentmindedness, lent her *rod of wonder* to a fellow wizard named Lerat Den'dra, and thieves stole it from him. He did not mention the theft to Rasamiri, and she forgot that she loaned the rod out at all.

Last night, the people in the marketplace and tavern areas of Arcanix were treated to the most varied magical display they had ever seen. Swaths of grass covered stony areas, objects disappeared, people turned green, and an occasional lightning bolt ripped through the area wounding or killing some people. The PCs may have been out in the marketplace and witnessed some strange effect (use the *rod of wonder* table [*DMG* 237] to generate random effects). They could not find the source, however, even for projected effects like streams of butterflies. Some assumed that apprentices were playing games on each other, but others muttered about dark magic and doom coming upon everyone in the village.

Some of the wizards in the village, and even up at the Arcane Congress, have evil ambitions. One of these (you get to make up the name this time) contacts the PCs. He thinks that a *rod of wonder* is being used, and the only person in the village with one is Rasamiri. This wizard wants the rod for himself and Rasamiri dead, and he is willing to pay handsomely.

d100 Motivations

00-35 The patron wizard is sincere, and he is not holding back anything.

36-70 The patron wizard hopes the PCs will be killed on the mission (and another lackey of his would collect the rod), but he is otherwise sincere and not planning any direct harm to the PCs.

71-90 The patron wizard has hired some assassins to take out the PCs as soon as they have the rod and right after their battle with Rasamiri.

91-00 Rasamiri leads a double life and is the patron wizard in disguise. If the PCs agree to take her job, then she knows they are evil and will slay them when they try to slay her. She will be well prepared when they arrive to attack her.

d100 Complications

00-40 A group of thieves has the *rod of wonder* and was testing it out last night. They discovered its unfortunate as well as beneficial

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for transporting this adventure into other campaign worlds. *Complete Mage* could be useful for NPC wizards and *Complete Scoundrel* for NPC thieves.

Forgotten Realms: This is a good Waterdeep adventure. There are a lot of wizards there.

Generic: A city with an absentminded wizard is all you need, plus whatever setting you envision for the adventure itself. Additional wizards as competitors are nice, but they could be replaced with other kinds of competitors.

Greyhawk: The world of Greyhawk is so much like a generic campaign in many ways that it could go just about anywhere. The author suggests Hardby, where actions against a female wizard may be more difficult, especially for male PCs.

Modern: Magic items such as *rods of wonder* don't exist in the modern world unless they are brought from some other

effects (after turning a favorite tavern ethereal). They now plan to use it to cover up their robberies and don't want to part with it.

41-50 The *rod of wonder* has a side effect that makes its wielder invisible whenever it is carried with the intent to use it. That is why no one could trace the source of the effects last night. That and the fact that the wielder was moving all the time. Thus, the rod hides itself by hiding its wielder.

51-65 The *rod of wonder* has a side-effect curse attached to it. The wielder becomes progressively more evil and more paranoid with each use. The thief wielding it has been twisted quite a bit after last night's tests. The paranoia leads to more protections against the rod being stolen, making the PCs' job harder.

66-80 The *rod of wonder* has a curse attached to it. If it is stolen and the thief attempts to use it, the rod works normally but a random monster is summoned from the *summon monster I-VII* spell tables. The rod attacks the wielder unless the wielder is invisible, in which case it seeks out random targets. Last night's tests were accompanied by a lot of summoned monster attacks.

81-00 Other parties are interested in the rod. Rasamiri is the only known owner of such an item in the whole area, and any wizard that figures out the origin of the effects knows it is hers. Some want it out of her (or anyone's) hands, while others just want it for themselves. These parties either try to steal the rod from the PCs (or hire someone to do so), or try to negotiate with the PCs to get the rod. Somehow everyone knows that the PCs are on the job (divination magic is amazing, isn't it?).

world or plane. Better skip this one for your **d20 Modern** campaign.

"Mirror, mirror on the wall . . ." -- *Forgotten Realms*

Westgate, home of the Night Masks, is a city known for thieves and scoundrels. The Night Masks used to hold uncontested sway over the city's illegal activities, but with the death of the Faceless, smaller guilds have cropped up from time to time. These guilds are pursued relentlessly by local heroes and law enforcement, because they are easier to remove than the Night Masks (which survive under different leadership).

Then reports filter through the taverns that the heroic paladin Zalah Mystof, who was known for tracking and arresting thieves, has begun killing them off instead. They are just rumors, but the killings become more frequent and witnesses say they saw Zalah in the area or even witnessed him slaughtering thieves that had surrendered.

Needless to say, the smaller guilds that are the target of Zalah's zeal are very nervous, and they look for mercenaries to kill the paladin as quickly as possible. The PCs could be hired by several different guilds and collect money for the same job from all these patrons -- if they can find and kill the paladin.

d100 Motivations

00-00 No tricky motivations here; everyone wants the paladin Zalah dead as soon as possible.

d100 Complications

Campaign Adaptation

Complete Scoundrel is your friend for this hook, since thieves abound. You might also find *Complete Champion* useful, but you have to wait until May for it. Westgate is published in **Forgotten Realms** products, or you can use *Cityscape* to place the adventure in another city.

Eberron: Sharn is an obvious choice for this adventure. Perhaps too obvious. Fairhaven in Aundair is a good alternate choice. You could even set it in Stormreach (on Xen'drik).

Generic: A city with some thieves' guilds is what you need. Easy, huh?

00-50 The Zalah that is killing the thieves is an evil duplicate of the real Zalah, who was slain by the duplicate. Zalah ran into a *mirror of opposition* trap when pursuing a group of thieves, and the mirror's duplicate slew him. Then it began slaying thieves, because it is still Zalah (just evil).

51-60 Zalah is under the mental control of the new leader of the Night Masks, and he is being used to clear out the smaller gangs permanently. Should the PCs break the mental control, they can get Zalah to lead them back to at least some members of the Night Masks.

61-85 The evil Zalah has created himself a lair in the sewers under Westgate (all cities in the Realms with great thieves' guilds have sewers). He has not placed any guardian creatures himself, but some nasty water-dwelling monsters have moved in.

86-00 Zalah is not evil at all; he slew the evil duplicate because it was deadlier than himself. He gave up arresting thieves because it did no good. Now he is adamant about killing thieves.

Greyhawk: Set this in Greyhawk City itself. Other cities will work just fine, but the Free City has a lot of different thief elements you can work in to complicate matters (including racial issues with Rhenee thieves).

Modern: A city with some thieves' guilds . . . oh, yeah. See above. In the modern world these are crime cartels or mafias or something like that. Try New York City.

About the Author

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Steal This Hook!

"Please Help Me"

By Robert Wiese

This month, *Complete Champion* hits the shelves and gives you a lot of fun information about playing heroic championlike characters, along with a boatload of new feats and prestige classes. Champions always need things to do, and most of a champion's quests fall into one of two main categories: defeat evil and help innocents. We'll leave the direct hooks to evil until later, and focus on the innocents. This month, three different kinds of innocents in trouble seek champions to help them. Bring them into your campaign today to see what your players' heroes are made of.

Sob Story -- *Forgotten Realms*

Traveling in the Ride is dangerous, but the barbarian nomads can be avoided if one stays on the road between Ilenvur and the Citadel of the Raven. The PCs are on that road, for whatever reason, when someone sees a body lying in the cold plains north of the road. The body is that of a halfling bard named Chanker (for short), and he is almost dead from starvation, thirst, and exposure. His clothes are tattered so badly that they barely stay on his small body. If revived, he looks with startled wonder at the PCs, thanks the gods, and then begins this tale in a sad and low voice.

"I am the only one to escape. My friends and comrades are all . . . I don't know anymore. Eight of us set out for the Great Glacier and crossed a portion of the Tortured Lands. We chose that route for directness and because the Tortured Land is unpopulated. Two days in, we found a fortress rising from the volcanic plains. Being adventurers, we went to investigate, but before we had even entered we blacked out and awoke in cells. A tall genie with red skin told us we were his slaves and set us to work, but we knew he was trying to fool our minds somehow. It turns out that everyone succumbed but me. I pretended, instead, and bided my time. My companions accepted their lot. Finally, after months, I escaped through a drainage hole and made my way across the Tortured Lands, and then into the barbarian lands we now occupy. By the time I had come halfway across the steppes, I was feverish and delirious due to lack of sustenance. Finally, I could go no farther, and I thought I would die in these harsh lands. Praise Yondalla that you have found me."

Chankar begs the PCs to go back with him, face the genie, and free his friends. He is worried that they might already be dead because of his own escape. He offers all their gear in payment for their lives -- gear now held by the genie.

d100 Motivations

01-60 Chankar is on the up-and-up.

61-75 Chankar is a demon servant of the slavemaster and was put here specifically to lure the PCs to the fortress because they are carrying something the slavemaster wants.

76-85 Chankar is making up the whole tale because he is afraid the PCs will kill him. He plans to lead them north a few days and then disappear on them. There really is a fortress, even though Chankar's companions are not there (since he didn't have any).

86-00 Chankar is a friend or relative of one of the PCs, and he tells them the truth even though he was supposed to lie to them to lure them to the fortress for reasons of greed. He hopes the PCs can slay the slavemaster and free his friends, who serve as insurance that Chankar behaves when away from the fortress.

d100 Complications

00-25 The slavemaster isn't a genie; it's a demon that a wizard trapped on this plane. The demon slew the wizard and then moved the wizard's fortress to the Tortured Land to be out of the public eye while it gained strength and power.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for other campaign worlds. If you play this in a cold area, *Frostburn* may help, and if you use demons then *Fiendish Codex I* would be useful. If you stick with genies, then the core books should do it for you.

Eberron -- Finding Chankar in the Eldeen Reaches, and placing the fortress in the Demon Wastes, would work very well for this adventure.

Generic -- The fortress needs a remote place, though it doesn't have to be inhospitable. Remember that Chankar can only get so far before dying, so don't put it in too remote a spot.

Greyhawk -- You could place the fortress at the edge of the Sea of Dust, and Chankar on the other side of the Hellfurnaces after a truly miraculous journey on which he found some hallucinogenic food sources that helped him survive.

26-45 The other adventurers have become willing slaves of the genie (or demon), and they don't want to be freed. They won't report the PCs' presence, but they resist being carried away from the fortress. This could be the result of charm magic or simply their own choice to be enslaved.

46-70 The Tortured Land is home to more than just this fortress. Its cold, sculpted plains are home to a few monsters that have wandered down from the Great Glacier, including ice worms and remorhazes.

71-00 The fortress is gone when the PCs reach the site. The slavemaster moved the whole thing a few miles farther into the Tortured Land because the halfling escaped, and the PCs have to decide if they believe the fortress existed and then figure out where it is. The slavemaster erased signs of its existence, which means the PCs have some intense searching to do to discover them.

"Fight My Battle" -- *Eberron*

Droaam is a dangerous place for anyone not of a monstrous race or of monstrous descent. The land is crawling with ogres, medusas, gnolls, hags and whatever else, and the humanoids that make up the populations of other nations are viewed with

some distrust. The weight of the law, such as it is, falls more heavily upon humanoids there, just as it falls more heavily on the monsters in other lands.

The Great Crag is the capitol of this land, and it serves as the home of the hags called the Daughters of Sora Kell. Trolls and ogres keep the laws that these hags hand down, usually with a lot of force and an excess of enjoyment. Prisoners are sometimes sent to the gladiatorial arena for a one-time chance to win their freedom. Usually they don't, because the gladiators are fierce and well trained. When the hags are feeling unusually cruel, a victim might be offered several chances to win his (or her) freedom, suffering successive resurrections to fight over and over again.

The PCs, visiting the Great Crag for some reason, are walking down the street when they see a thin and scrawny half-elf on a corner trying to talk to passers-by. Most ignore him, since he is chained between two trolls who look intimidating. "Please, I am innocent! Is there no one who will stand for me?" This half-elf has been accused of a great crime, and instead of a trial he has been sent to the arena to fight for his life. He is obviously unfit for this, so the magistrates have allowed him to find someone to fight in his place. The fighter will not suffer the punishments for the crime, except death if he or she cannot win in the arena. All that the probably-doomed man can offer is his gratitude.

Note: This one might be a tough sell to any but obvious do-gooders, so don't try too hard (or don't use it at all if they just won't go for it).

d100 Motivations

00-60 The half-elf, Ismorath, is innocent of the crime but cannot prove it. Since justice against humans and elves works a little backwardly here, this is his only chance to "prove his innocence." Basically, if he puts on a good show and wins, the magistrates don't care if he did it or not and will release him.

61-70 The half-elf was set up by someone associated with the gladiatorial arena, solely for the purpose of getting more people to fight there. The half-elf is also not the first person so set up, just the first allowed to find a surrogate.

71-00 The half-elf knows that the trolls plan to release him and hold whoever agrees to fight in his place responsible for the crime (that's justice in Droaam), but he is cowardly and tries to recruit a PC anyway.

d100 Complications

00-45 The half-elf is a scapegoat, who is being punished so that everyone forgets the crime. Whether the PC wins or loses is immaterial (except perhaps to the PC). However, following up on the crime could lead to a more interesting adventure full of dark haggish intrigue.

Campaign Adaptation

This hook has specifics about it that might make it unsuitable for some campaign worlds. If you can use it, then you might find *Complete Warrior* useful for making gladiators, and the various *Monster Manuals* useful for making monstrous ones. Remember to use spiked chains and nets. Watch *Gladiator* with Russell Crowe to get the feel of the arena.

Forgotten Realms: This adventure is well suited for Hillsfar, on the Moonsea, though you should consider changing the monstrous gladiators to humanoid ones.

Generic: If you have a place in your campaign world that has gladiatorial fights, you're set. If not, make one or skip this hook.

Greyhawk: This kind of thing happens in lands of the former Great Kingdom of Ahlissa, so the Eastern Kingdom works for this adventure.

46-80 The master of the arena has been known to cheat on occasion, and he will make something turn out the way it's "supposed to." Actions might include releasing extra monsters if the PC is doing well, using better gladiators posing as worse ones, and slipping the PC faulty equipment.

81-00 Within the gladiators, there are factions and alliances. The PC perhaps has to navigate a gladiatorial uprising (a la *Gladiator*) while discharging his or her mission.

Rustlers -- *Greyhawk*

The Theocracy of the Pale is in the cold northwest part of the Flanaess. Priests of Pholtus rule the land -- a land of great rural stretches -- with their unwavering philosophies. The Rakers Mountains bound the country on the east, and the Phostwood bounds it on the west. Within this land, people live simply and work hard to make good lives.

The PCs are traveling in the eastern part of the country, from Rakervale south to Ogburg, when they find some giant-sized tracks crossing the road and heading eastward. A tracker can determine that they were hill giants, that there were about eight of them, and that they seemed to be carrying something heavy. The tracks lead east into the Rakers. Following them westward, the PCs arrive in a farming and ranching community where they learn that a number of cattle are missing. No one saw what happened to them, and though people have seen the large tracks, they don't know what the tracks belong to. This is the second time in a month that cattle have disappeared. The first was three weeks ago and the community concluded that it was a one-time theft. But they were wrong. The people here don't have the skills or courage to track the giants, and they beg the PCs in the name of Pholtus to help them. They have little to offer, but suggest that the giants must have collected some valuables.

d100 Motivations

00-75 Real giants are stealing real cows, and real ranchers are very scared. No one expects their cows back.

76-85 The giants are paid by an agent of Iuz to stir up trouble on the eastern side of the country. This agent has a contact in the village that is providing key information, but he does not know that he is allied with evil or helping the rustling giants.

86-00 One of the farmers is stealing cattle from the others and selling it far away. To cover the crime, he or she is faking the giant

footprints. (Adjust the complications below as needed.)

d100 Complications

00-25 The giants are stealing cattle not for themselves but for a white dragon that they are enslaved to.

26-70 The giants are stealing the cattle for themselves, but have never gotten any to their village. Both raiding parties have gone missing, eaten by a dangerous mountain predator such as a remorhaz or a purple worm.

71-75 The giants are not working alone; they are being used by agents of Iuz to draw attention to the eastern areas. Humans and other creatures of evil (perhaps even a demon) can be found among the giant encampment.

76-00 The giants have laid some traps along the path to their camp, in case they are pursued. These include deadfalls, rock avalanches, and falling log traps.

Campaign Adaptation

Giants love cattle in any campaign world. In the absence of a book on giants, use the class books to make beefed up giants with barbarian or scout levels, and add some giant clerics and sorcerers.

Eberron: Droaam could be the home of this adventure or, better yet, the areas of Breland adjacent to the Droaam border.

Forgotten Realms: In the Shaar, tribes of humans herd superior horses, and giants live in the nearby hills and mountains, so this is a good location for the adventure if you can get your PCs down there.

Generic: You need some ranches, some nearby mountains where evil giants live, and whatever else you want to complicate the plot with. You don't even need a city nearby.

About the Author

Robert Wiese has been playing **D&D** since 1978 after he watched a game played in the car on the way home from a Boy Scouts meeting. He was fascinated, and delved into this strange world of dragons and magic and sourcebooks. Years later, he was hired to edit tournaments for the **RPGA** Network, and from there progressed to running the network after his boss was assassinated in the great Christmas purge of 1996. Times were tough, but he persevered and brought the **RPGA** into a shining new era. Eventually he met a girl who liked to play **D&D** too, and he left Renton for the warmth and casinos of Reno, Nevada. Now, he works in the Pharmacology department of UNR studying mouse foot muscles and the effects of RF emissions on same. He spends as much time as possible with his wife Rhonda and year-old son Owen.

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Steal This Hook!

Paladin Quests

By Robert Wiese

With the release of *Complete Champion*in May, thoughts turn naturally to the heroic, especially the heroic fighter. Talk of heroic fighters usually includes paladins, those exemplars of goodness and law that fight for higher principles and chase evil across the land. This month's hooks involve paladins . . . but not exclusively. Any character can be a champion, so any character should have the chance to partake of heroic adventures. These hooks involve paladins that need the help of other heroic characters.

Imprisoned -- *Eberron*

Several hundred years ago, a paladin of the Silver Flame named Sojer Ustel single-handedly defended the small town of Banesia, in northwestern Thrane, from a tribe of werewolves that lived in the forest northeast of Daskaran. The group of werewolves preyed on the smaller towns in the region because the people could not defend themselves very well. Eventually, Sojer Ustel came to Banesia and rallied the people to make a stand. In the name of the Silver Flame, he attacked the werewolves when they next came to Banesia and drove them off. That started a war between the paladin and the werewolves that lasted for several months -- a war that the werewolves were losing.

At the end, the paladin disappeared without a trace. The worried people faked his presence when the werewolves next came. The tired werewolves, now reduced to only a few, decided that they'd had enough and left the area. The people rejoiced and gave the credit to Sojer for driving them off. They commissioned a statue of Sojer from descriptions of him. The statue was duly erected in the town square, but no trace of the man himself was ever found. He simply disappeared into history. He has served as an inspiration to generations of paladins ever since, and a legend states that he will return when needed.

Recently, a sage and historian came through trying to piece together the life of Sojer Ustel. In the course of her investigations she came to the conclusion that Sojer didn't just disappear; he was attacked by a demon and his soul was trapped in the statue in the center of Banesia. This sage, named Claristel, wants help finding Sojer's remains and somehow restoring him from the dead.

d100 Motivations

00-45 Claristel really is a historian, but she seeks Sojer's artifact sword rather than the paladin himself.

46-85 Claristel is sincere in what she tells the PCs.

86-00 The descendants of the werewolves that Sojer drove off have returned and seek to stop the PCs from restoring their ancient enemy.

d100 Complications

00-45 Sojer is indeed needed now, since the descendants of the werewolves he fought have returned to the area. Led by a nearly indestructible half-fiend werewolf, they cannot be stopped without Sojer's artifact holy sword, and that was lost when he disappeared.

46-70 A descendant of Sojer is in the town, since Sojer had a liaison with a local woman while there. This descendant wants Sojer restored as well so that the descendant can find and claim the holy sword.

71-85 Sojer has been driven mad during his centuries of imprisonment in the statue. If he is restored, he begins a streak of deranged evil acts. He must be stopped so that he can atone for these deeds (and be cured) if anyone is to find the sword.

86-00 Sojer's sword is normal. Sojer has the power within him (or did in his old body) to make any weapon he holds into a bane (shapechangers) weapon. He may or may not realize this. If he does not, then he seeks out his old sword when restored. But he needs his original body.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for using this hook in other campaign worlds. *Complete Champion* can help flesh out the petrified paladin. The **AD&D***Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts* could help with any werewolves you need.

Forgotten Realms: This adventure could work very well in the Dalelands, where each Dale (and each town) is more or less independent. The werewolves would live in the nearby forest. Daggerdale and Deepingdale offer access to the mountains as well.

A village stalked by werewolves (or were-whatevers -- it doesn't much matter) that is somewhat isolated is all you need.

Greyhawk: Set this adventure in Veluna or Furyondy, on the northern borders with the Vesve Forest and the lands of Iuz. Sojer becomes a paladin of Heironeous.

Modern: In the modern world, Europe seems a good locale for a werewolf-themed adventure. Specifically, set this in northern Scotland, or even central Scotland. Northern England could work, but it is rather populated nowadays. Some places in Wales and Germany might fit the bill too.

Ravenloft: This adventure could be especially well suited to Ravenloft, a land where evil slowly destroys anything good. It would have a tragic ending, of course.

Atonement -- *Greyhawk*

The PCs are in Rakervale, in the Theocracy of the Pale, for whatever reason. Perhaps they are on their way to Ratik, or they seek adventure in the Rakers. During the afternoon they witness a female warrior in bent and broken full plate armor limp into the town from the northwest and then collapse in the street. Her name is Saita Oroda, and she is trying to become a paladin of Pholtus. Either when revived right then by the PCs, or later, she can relate this story.

"When I was younger, I betrayed my family out of hatred, and I sold them into slavery to some trolls that live in the Troll Fens. Now that I have seen the Light of Pholtus and become a paladin, I must atone for my past misdeeds and undo as many of them as possible. So say the priests of the Blinding Light. I tracked the trolls that have my family, and only my younger brother has been killed in all these years. The rest still work for the trolls. I tried to free them, but the trolls are too much for me to defeat on my own. Unless Pholtus sends aid to me, I shall fail and never achieve the blessed state that I seek."

d100 Motivations

00-60 Saita is sincere in her desire and reasons. She really wants to be a paladin of Pholtus, poor girl.

61-80 Saita is trying to steal a valuable treasure from the trolls, not rescue her family. She wants the treasure either as an offering to the priest of Pholtus or for its power.

81-00 Saita is a shapechanged doppelganger or fiend trying to lure the PCs to their deaths at the troll camp. Perhaps she is a minion of a recurring villain in your campaign.

d100 Complications

00-30 The trolls work for a black dragon, and their camp is actually the dragon's lair.

31-50 There are actually very few trolls. The whole troll camp is on top of an entrance to the Underdark, and the trolls are slaves of a group of mind flayers. The trolls did buy people, who have been taken underground for dining or slavery.

51-75 The trolls have a well-fortified camp, and they are planning a war against the nearby Theocracy of the Pale.

76-00 The troll camp is deserted when the PCs arrive, and it looks like it has not been inhabited in a long time. Careful searching reveals the trolls left recently and moved deeper into the Troll Fens, and, as the PCs follow, they find troll corpses littering the trail. Something really nasty is picking off the trolls and the human slaves.

Campaign Adaptation

Trolls go anywhere, which is cool because as classic monsters go, they are hard to beat. Give them barbarian or scout levels to make them tougher. You can also use different kinds of trolls from *Monster Manual III*.

Eberron: Try the Shadow Marches. Xen'drik might be good too, since the captive parents could have been transported by ship or flying ship from Khorvaire.

Forgotten Realms: You could set this adventure near the High Moor. The trolls could live in the Moor or the Misty Forest.

Generic: You need a place where trolls live. Sounds simple, eh?

Modern: In the Modern world, trolls might live anywhere that is not too dry. These trolls could be members of a crime cartel in Japan or Europe. You could also stage them as brutish creatures living in the Everglades.

Resting in Peace -- *Forgotten Realms*

Traveling in the Dragon Coast region, the PCs come across the body of a warrior of good along the roadway between Teziir and Easting. He has just died from multiple sword and spear wounds, and his blood still flows on the ground. *Speak with dead* reveals that he is Orlon Caraway, a veteran crusader against evil who had just recently heard the call of paladinhood. He had not become a paladin yet when he was slain by several men and women in a vicious attack. He reveals that he is a native of Eversult, and that he would like to be buried there. He does not want to be restored to life; he has had a good campaign against evil and his time has clearly come.

If the PCs take his body to Eversult, the family assumes that they are friends of Orlon's and invite them to attend the funeral. There, the trouble begins. As the body is being carried in state from the church to the plot, a group of men and women (who could be any humanoid race, but humans might work best) attack the funeral guests. These marauders, all in black with face masks on, slaughter the guests, and especially the members of Orlon's family, with gusto. If seriously opposed by the PCs, they flee, but try to take out Orlon's family first.

d100 Motivations

00-35 Any surviving members of Orlon's family would like the PCs to find out who is behind this attack and make sure that another one doesn't happen.

36-65 A remote cousin, who lives in the nearby town of Ilipur, hired a thieves' guild to kill the rest of the family so that he could inherit all the family property.

66-80 Orlon himself is behind the attacks, even though he's dead. He actually does want to be restored to life, but only after the rest of the family is killed off. He hired the thieves and sacrificed his own life to throw off suspicion. In responding to *speak with dead* spells, he avoids answering about his own involvement.

81-00 Surviving members of the family want the rogues killed (not caught) because the family hired them to kill any competitors in business at the funeral and the rogues turned on them. In this case, Orlon is an innocent pawn that the family could not let fall into "goodness" by becoming a paladin.

d100 Complications

00-30 The attackers only appear human (or elven, or whatever). They are actually demonic monsters from the lower planes.

31-50 The attackers come from an offshoot of the Nightmasks, the powerful thieves' guild of Westgate. Crossing them could get the PCs in real trouble.

51-75 An old enemy of the family has been nursing thoughts of vengeance for decades. Recently turned into a vampire, he or she has used newfound powers to dominate some skilled cutthroats to enact revenge.

Campaign Adaptation

A lot of human-ish foes are in this adventure, so when you bring it into your campaign world (assuming you don't run it in the **Forgotten Realms**), make use of *Complete Champion*, *Complete Scoundrel* (especially this one), *Complete Mage*, and Complete anything else you want. *Complete Riding Dog* could even be useful. If you like yuan-ti, use *Serpent Kingdoms*.

Eberron: Breland has enough intrigue and wealthy families for this adventure. Ardev is especially good, because the conflict could expand to include Cyran refugees. Hatheril is also suitable. If you run your campaign in Shar, you can fit the adventure there.

Generic: Set this adventure in any city or town where a somewhat wealthy family could have a scion that fights evil and wants to become a paladin (or wants to betray his/her family). A lot of options are available here. If no pirates operate nearby and you like that complication, make them into barge pirates or land-bound smugglers or whatever.

Greyhawk: Ahlissa is a good place for this adventure; Chathold is especially good. The Hold of the Sea Princes, now taken over by the Scarlet Brotherhood, would also work well.

Modern: Try a small city or town in Asia or Australia. Asia may have a better feel, since this seems like a samurai adventure, but Australia could work very well in the frontier regions.

76-00 The family is allied with some pirates from the Pirate Isles, while the attackers are other pirates. The whole affair is in reality a war between pirate factions, and the PCs are going to have to go to the isles and deal with pirates to get to the truth.

About the Author

Robert Wiese has been playing **D&D** since 1978 after he watched a game played in the car on the way home from a Boy Scouts meeting. He was fascinated, and delved into this strange world of dragons and magic and sourcebooks. Years later, he was hired to edit tournaments for the **RPGA** Network, and from there progressed to running the network after his boss was assassinated in the great Christmas purge of 1996. Times were tough, but he persevered and brought the **RPGA** into a shining new era. Eventually he met a girl who liked to play **D&D** too, and he left Renton for the warmth and casinos of Reno, Nevada. Now, he works in the Pharmacology department of UNR studying mouse foot muscles and the effects of RF emissions on same. He spends as much time as possible with his wife Rhonda and son Owen.

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Steal This Hook!

Ravaging Monsters

By Robert Wiese

It seems sometimes that the natural purpose of **D&D** characters is to fight monsters; and this month, with *Monster Manual V* out, it's natural to turn our eyes toward more fights. So, let's do that, but not stop there. Use the hooks presented below to draw your players (and characters) beyond the fighting and into a more complex adventure. I give you the fight, or the excuse to get the PCs into the neighborhood, and the rest is up to you.

I love feedback. If you use the ideas in this column, email me at robwiese8@yahoo.com and tell me which ones and how they went. That helps me know what appeals and what doesn't, so that I can make more that are useful for you.

Keep Your Roots Away from Me -- *Greyhawk*

> The arable land of Furyondy stretches for miles in every direction from where you stand, and though some of it has been torn up by war, the nation can still produce vast amounts of food. You are on the road from Littleberg, which you left yesterday, and are working your way northward toward Chendl on some business. The morning passes pleasantly on this sunny day, and as midday advances you anticipate reaching Chendl tomorrow. In the distance, maybe 100 feet away, you see some kind of a disturbance in the field, like something tearing up the ground from below. It moves toward you with surprising speed, and then a number of large roots launch themselves from under the topsoil at you.

The root creatures are burrow roots, a new creature from *Monster Manual V*. It you don't have this book, then you can replace the burrow roots with bulettes.

d100 Motivations

With an opening like this one, the PCs provide the motivation. However, as they investigate they find a number of people who want this problem solved and are genuine in their desires.

d100 Complications

00-40 The burrow roots are a new colony in the area that an evil druid planted to drive the farmers away and return the land to a wilder state.

41-75 The burrow roots were planted here by minions of Iuz, as a means of destabilizing the populace through fear. Hundreds of them are maturing in different "nests" within the region, and they will cause a mass panic if no one does anything. Finding the people (or whatever) behind them could be more difficult.

76-85 The burrow roots have broken free of whoever was controlling them and are now on a rampage of their own.

86-00 The roots have been around for months now, and several villages in the region are preparing to "root" them out and destroy them. However, the burrow roots are elusive and retreat before being destroyed. The frustration is increasing as farmers lose crops and livestock and cannot do anything about it.

Campaign Adaptation

Burrow roots could probably go anywhere. Using them this way is just one idea. They make good creatures that are controlled by some more powerful enemy.

Eberron: Anywhere in central Breland is a good place for this adventure. Placing it near a border allows you to tie them to some unresolved conflict from the Last War.

Forgotten Realms: Set this adventure in the Dalelands, somewhere where Zhentarim can be blamed for their presence. On the other hand, the Zhentarim don't have to be behind the infestation; drow are possible, and the Dales have a lot of enemies. They could even be tied to Sembian nobles or merchants.

Generic: This adventure goes in a rural area where some power, group, or person has a vested interest in terrorizing the populace. A small town nearby would help, or several villages. The mastermind should, ideally, be someone local.

Bring Back That Shepherd! -- *Forgotten Realms*

Tethyr is a beautiful country, with mountains and forests and rivers throughout. The greatest concentration of people is in the west near the sea, but Saradush and (newly) Riatavin are sizable communities in the east. The PCs are traveling north along the small road (seeing more and more use in recent years) from Saradush to Riatavin. Perhaps they recently sorted out the mess of "The Three Hagstekeers". Perhaps not. Whatever the reason, they find themselves on this small road. They have not seen anyone for a couple hours when they see, off to the east, a small

flying dragon about half a mile away. It appears to those with good Spot check results to be carrying a sheep in one claw, and something small in the other. Really good Listen check results at this range allow them to hear cries for help. The creature, a wyvern, flies close toward them so that they can determine that the creature is carrying a human as well as the sheep, before veering off toward the nearby Omlarandin Mountains.

This may not be enough to get them interested, but Riatavin is still more than a day's travel away. This region is plentiful with farms and ranches, any of which could provide a place to stay. From the people there, the PCs learn that wyverns are flying out of the Omlarandins and snatching up farmers and shepherds in the plains north of the Omlarandins and south of Riatavin. Normally the creatures come out only to grab sheep for their meals, and the people around the Omlarandins have become accustomed to a small loss of livestock. The taking of shepherds and farmers is new, and everyone knows that the wyverns don't hunt such small creatures as humans for food. Since the frequency of attacks is rising, the people are worried, and any offers of help would be gratefully received.

If they don't stop with anyone for the night, then the following day the road passes close to a large field of sheep. The sheep are about 600 feet away from the road, attended by three shepherds (a brother and two sisters). As the PCs pass, two wyverns streak down from the sky and make attacks at sheep and shepherd alike. Once one grabs one of the shepherds, it flies off without even taking a sheep. The second takes a sheep, and grabs one of the women that was defending the sheep, and then flies off. The surviving family member begs the PCs to help rescue his or her siblings.

Note: This adventure works equally well with blackwings (a new creature in *Monster Manual V*). Change the mind flayers to mind flayer necromancers, and you're good to go.

d100 Motivations

While the motivations on the villain end may be varied, all the people here are simple folk who really need help from flying monsters. No one is capable of harnessing wyverns and throwing them at his or her friends.

d100 Complications

00-40 A pack of wyverns that lives in the Omlarandins has been dominated by a group of mind flayers that reached the surface from the Underdark in the mountain range. They are using the wyverns to collect slaves and food, since wyvern brain is not nearly as good as humanoid brain.

41-65 One survivor of a wyvern attack is in a village just north of the mountains. This woman, Zeradu Eldmina, remembers very little of her experience other than being snatched by a wyvern and dropped in the mountains. She barely survived by crawling into a place of hiding and then making her way out of the mountains days later. What really happened was that mind flayers dominated her and modified her memory, and she is now a plant among the humans and delivers information to the mind flayers without remembering doing so.

66-90 The wyverns are working on their own. There is a half-fiend wyvern leading and organizing the creatures for some fiendish purpose.

91-00 The creatures making the attacks on humans are not wyverns at all, but some kind of shapechanged creatures. The PCs can slay wyverns to their hearts' content without solving the problem. They have to dig deeper.

Campaign Adaptation

You can probably work some wyverns into your campaign and, with them, this adventure idea. *Lords of Madness* would help with the mind flayers, assuming you go that route, and *Fiendish Codex I* and *Fiendish Codex II* would help if you decide on shapechanged fiends instead.

Eberron: Though Droaam no doubt has wyverns and mind flayers, it's kind of short on humanoids working farms. Try Karrnath instead, where this could be a welcome change from undead.

Generic: Takes some farms, add some wyverns and some mind flayers perhaps (for spice), stir well and heat until boiling, then simmer a few hours.

Greyhawk: The Theocracy of the Pale works, or perhaps the Duchy of Tenh with the wyverns coming from a forest nearby. Ahlissa, especially in the south, is also a good location.

That's a Big Bug -- *Eberron*

During the Last War, the nations of Khorvaire were using just about every kind of creature or ally they could (which is great for DMs since it allows you to tailor your campaign with new creatures as needed or desired). This was especially true of the last years of the war, when resources were running very low. And Cyre was the most desperate of nations. Situated in the middle, it was attacked on all sides throughout the Last War. The leaders of Cyre used both House Cannith devices and creatures from other planes. When the Day of Mourning came, these creatures were left behind to survive as best as they could.

Valenar is a land of warlike elves that continues to make raids on its neighbors (not the Mournland, but Karrnath and the Talenta Plains). But some elves engage in more peaceful lifestyles, and many small communities exist in the northern part of the country near the Blade Desert and the Mournland. The PCs are visiting one of the major cities of Valenar when they hear rumors of destruction in the north. The rumors are crazy and varied, running from "it's nothing" to "a whole village was destroyed by demon beetles!"

House Lyrandar has land in the northern part of the country, and a lesser member of this house named Zeradu sends a note to the PCs asking them to meet him at his favorite tavern. He explains that the rumors are probably nothing, but they talk of events that have happened very close to House Lyrandar land and the senior members of the house are concerned. He offers the PCs either gold or an exchange of services (depending on what will motivate them) to go north, see what is going on, and make sure that whatever it is doesn't affect House Lyrandar.

d100 Motivations

00-45 Zeradu hopes that his swift action in this "crisis" will bring him to the notice of senior house members and lead to a promotion. He hopes there is something horribly wrong, and that the PCs can take care of it so that he can claim credit for as much as possible.

46-75 Zeradu hates this assignment and wants out of this elf-infested country. He hopes that by solving this problem he can come to the notice of house officials elsewhere and get a transfer. His hatred of his current situation is poorly hidden in his attitude, and he would not mind at all if some elves died so that he could be transferred.

76-00 Zeradu is being manipulated into what someone thinks is a fool's errand. The manipulator knows of Zeradu's ambition (see first option) but thinks that there is nothing to the rumors. By taking a lot of effort over nothing, Zeradu can be made to look like a fool and a waster of house resources, and the manipulator can remove him from the house. Perhaps the two are vying for the same woman?

d100 Complications

00-75 There are destroyed villages and even a small town. Siege beetles (see *Monster Manual V*) from the plane of Shavarath were called into Cyre during the Last War, and they remain still. They have wandered over the border and through the Blade Desert looking for food, since they have cleaned out the corpses in the southern part of the Mournland. They are mindless but hungry vermin who avoid armed traveling groups but attack settlements.

76-90 Siege beetles are involved, but only two. Karrnathi war groups that are tired of the Valaes Tairn raids use them. They seek to lure a raiding group into a trap and are using the beetles to create havoc in the hope of tricking the elves into preparing for the wrong foes.

91-00 A demon prince of Shavarath sent the siege beetles to exact revenge on the elves because a group of Valaes Tairn invaded the demon prince's fortress and disrupted a major offensive against a devil lord's forces. The siege beetles might be half-fiends as well, and other demons may be waiting to tear apart vulnerable elven flesh. The PCs would simply be in the way of the demon prince's goal of obliterating Valenar a little at a time.

Campaign Adaptation

Because siege beetles appear near fields of carnage, or are used there by spellcasters, this adventure idea doesn't fit just anywhere. But, once you find a good spot for the beetles, all you need is your core books and *Monster Manual V* to run it.

Forgotten Realms: The area around the High Moor is very good for this adventure, since the High Moor is the blasted graveyard of the destroyed Miyeritar elven kingdom. Siege beetles could have come from Acheron to clean an area of the Moor so that someone else could establish a fortification.

Generic: The siege beetles should come from a battlefield area, preferably in the wilderness, because they eat corpses.

Greyhawk: Ancient battlefields are not plentiful, but you could set this adventure in the Shield Lands where they meet with the Lands of Iuz. A lot of battles take place there, and it would be natural for siege beetles to be called to the area.

About the Author

Robert Wiese has been playing **D&D** since 1978 after he watched a game played in the car on the way home from a Boy Scouts meeting. He was fascinated, and delved into this strange world of dragons and magic and sourcebooks. Years later, he was hired to edit tournaments for the **RPGA** Network, and from there progressed

to running the network after his boss was assassinated in the great Christmas purge of 1996. Times were tough, but he persevered and brought the **RPGA** into a shining new era. Eventually he met a girl who liked to play **D&D** too, and he left Renton for the warmth and casinos of Reno, Nevada. Now, he works in the Pharmacology department of UNR studying mouse foot muscles and the effects of RF emissions on same. He spends as much time as possible with his wife Rhonda and son Owen.

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